

Addis Ababa University
College of Education and Behavioral Studies
Department of Special Needs Education

Practices and challenges of Early Childhood Care and Education
in Addis Ababa, Arada Sub-City Government Kindergartens

By: - G/Egziabher Assefa

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Abbreviations /Acronyms

AACAEB- Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau

ECCE- Early Childhood Care and Education

ECE- Early Childhood Education

FFA- Education For All

EPA- Ethiopia Psychology Association

ESDP- Education Sector Development Programme

IEP- Individual Educational Plan

KG- Kindergarten

MDGs-Millennium Development Goals

MoE- Ministry of Education

MoH- Ministry of Health

MoWA- Ministry of Women and social Affairs

NGOs- Non Governmental Organizations

NPF-ECCEE- National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education of Ethiopia

SNE- Special Needs Education

UN- United Nations

UNESCO- United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organizations

UNICEF- United Nations Children's Fund

UPE- Universal Primary Education

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the practices and challenges of Early Childhood Care and Education in Addis Ababa, specifically Arada Sub-City government kindergartens. Based on the purpose of the study, the access and the sufficiency and efficiency nature of key inputs and management practices, the practice of major stakeholders' participation on the ground overall practices and challenges encountered of the programme underway assessed . To this end, descriptive survey method was used for the study using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, however more emphasis to quantitative approach. Data were gathered from 11 kindergartens through various means from 11 principals (1 not responded), 77 teachers (2 not responded), 44 parents/guardians and 2 pre-primary education experts. Data instruments were questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion, interview and observation. The data gathered through interview and focus group discussion were transcribed, analyzed, and triangulate with quantitative data where necessary and appropriate. In addition, different documents were consulted and summarized and described deeply. The findings of the study showed that the sample kindergartens are not that much conducive for all children such as narrow classes, great number of children in the classes, low Participation of parents, and stakeholders, Lack of training principals, teachers, experts and parents/guardians are great barriers to implement Early childhood Care and Education. Absences of experience sharing of kindergartens, limited support system of supervision and collaboration of stakeholders are the other barriers of the kindergartens .Finally based on the findings and discussions made some helpful suggestions have been recommended.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Early childhood care and education is the subject of considerable debate and interest among governments and politicians in all parts of the world. International organizations such as UNICEF and UNESCO are stressing the importance of providing quality early childhood education and care to all children, not only for those from less-advantaged backgrounds but for all children. Their arguments are based upon the increasing research evidence that has shown the long-term benefits of offering young children quality care and education in the early years (Audrey Curtis & Maureen O'Hagan, 2003:4).

Moreover, in order to ensure the transmission of knowledge and further development from generation to generation, the time where foundation can be laid is early childhood considering this fact, the issue of early childhood is being in the global policy spotlight than ever before indiscriminately in one or the other, from urban to rural and from richest to poorest countries all over the world. Likewise, the government of Ethiopia puts this hot issue and developed National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) (MoE, MoH & MoWA, 2010a:18) stated that “ it is during the early years that children learn and acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes quickly with minimal effort.” However, poverty and other disadvantages can hamper the all round development of the children. Hence, carefully planned early interventions equitably and equally can have long term positive outcomes for children in all aspects of life (Woodhead, 2006, Siraj-Blatchford & Woodhead, 2009, cited in Woodhead, 2009:1 as cited in Yalew, 2011:3).

The Policy Framework again emphasizes the fundamental importance of ECCE in accelerating attainment of EFA and the MDGs (MoE, MoH, & MoWA, 2010a:8).

ECCE can serve as a support system for all children and particularly for those with developmental delays or children at risk because of socio-economic problem in their families (Ayalew, 2011:1)

ECCE refers to health, hygiene, nutrition, capturing learning through early stimulation, guide and arrangement of development activities and opportunities. So, to implement such care and education effectively, the quality of pre-primary education is very important. It also creates a chance for an early inclusive community, and prevents discrimination and prejudice.

Though Addis Ababa has got a relative good coverage of kindergarten education as compared to other regional states and cities, being a capital city of country and the diplomatic center of Africa, still the coverage and service delivery is not as such pleasing.

As the Education Annual Statistics Abstract of Addis Ababa Education Bureau (AACAEB, 2011) indicates, the net enrollment rate in kindergarten is 68.0%. This shows that about 32.0% of children did not get access to kindergarten at their appropriate age (4-6). Moreover, the statistics revealed that about 20.8% of the enrollment are either early or late starters of education service which has its own impact on the quality of the process, and outcome of the program. On the other hand, the current participation rate as mentioned above shows the presence of a big demand for kindergarten education, especially and most likely, from the low income and disadvantaged group since they can't afford to pay educational fee for their children.

Moreover, in the earlier times, there are government kindergartens providing education service in Addis Ababa where parents are obliged to pay reasonable or little fee to cover at least the running cost. But, in the newly established kindergartens in attachment with those government primary schools, no parent/community is compelled to pay fee for the education of the child.

All young children must be nurtured in a safe and caring environment that allow them to become healthy, alert, secure, and be able to learn. So, early childhood education is one of the intervention methods for enhancing the later academic success of young children (Biklen, 1992; Sapon-Shevin, 2000/2001; Stainback and Stainback, 1990 cited in Yalew, 2011:2).

In its comprehensive education policy, Ethiopia recognizes the importance of kindergarten

education by putting its goal for all round development of the child in preparation for formal schooling (MoE, 1994:14) though insignificant attention was given in practice. As indicated earlier, Ethiopia developed separate National Policy Framework for ECCE which shows the commitment of the country toward ECCE implementation and it is one step ahead in giving due attention to the crucial issue.

When we see early childhood care and education practice in Ethiopia, teachers are not well trained for pre-school teaching: they are not working in collaboration with families, and other professionals (MOE, 2009). Furthermore, the existing urban-based modern pre-primary schools are limited for children of age 4 to 6 and are not also inclusive for children with special needs (Demeke, 2007:186).

The same problem is reflected in Arada Sub-City pre-primary schools and that is why the researcher is interested to assess practices and challenges of Early Childhood Care and Education in eleven Arada Sub-City government kindergartens.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Many scholars explain, the overall aim of early childhood care and education is to optimize the children's development and ability to participate in family and community life. It also provides parents and the community with the knowledge skills and support to meet the needs of their children.

The newly developed National Policy Framework of Early Childhood Care and Education of Ethiopia (MoE, MoH & MoWA, 2010a:16) emphasizes the unwavering importance of early intervention in a coordinated manner along with strategy of implementation and states that "Ethiopia needs a comprehensive approach to ECCE in order to ensure that all children reach their full potential strategies building on existing policies, structures and resources and using evidence based and low-cost interventions need to form the foundation for ECCE".

Although children get most of their early stimulation within the home and from neighbors and friends, children should also be able to take advantage of structured group activity from a very early age in supplement. Peers also play a vital role on children's social and emotional

development (Smart,C.R. & Smart, S.M., 1997:76;UNICEF, 2007 as cited in Yalew,2011:4).

Hence, our country is one of the poorest nations in the world where appropriate and efficient management practice is required for efficient and effective utilization of available resources and implementation of the program without any discrimination

Generally, there are challenges in practicing early childhood care and education in Ethiopia. The same is true in Arada Sub-city government kindergarten schools which show that early childhood care and education practice faces a lot of problems.

That is why; I am interested in searching the current practices and challenges of early childhood care and education in selected government kindergartens in Arada Sub-city through addressing the following questions.

1. How is the accessibility of government kindergartens education in the sub-city?
2. To what extent are the kindergartens equipped with the necessary trained man power, learning materials and over all indoor/outdoor environments?
3. What is the status of stakeholders' participation/ involvement in kindergarten education?
4. What opportunities and challenges have kindergartens encountered in practicing ECCE?

1.3 Objective of the study

The general objective of the study was to investigate the existing practices, and challenges of Early Childhood Care and Education in Arada Sub-City government kindergartens. To this end, it has the following specific objectives

- To assess the accessibility of the kindergartens ;
- To assess whether the key inputs like teacher, curriculum and different facilities are in place or not;
- To assess the status of stakeholders' participation/involvement in the area under the study;
- To identify opportunities and challenges obtained during programme implementation;

1.4 Significance of the study

Assessing the practices of pre-primary school education is very important part of education process to obtain evidences for improving the challenges/problems. So, understanding this, the study had the following significance.

- To suggest some possible measures to government bodies (at Woreda levels and at the regional level) so as to improve the quality of pre-primary school education implementation
- It identifies attitudinal influence and training gaps that make difficulties towards early childhood care and education.
- To improve the collaborative and interactive efforts and responsibilities of teachers and parents to assist children's learning by the help of concerned, woreda, sub-city and regional governmental bodies.
- To increase the awareness of pre-primary school through woreda level education office experts to equip pre-school with essential human and material resources required to effectively run pre-primary school education.
- It may help other educators and researchers for further research in the area.

1.5 Delimitation of the study

According to the information obtained from Arada Sub-city Education Bureau, currently there are a total of about 55 kindergartens from those, 13 governments, 6 public, 23 private, 6 community, 6 church and 1 charitable organization kindergartens in Arada sub-city. But, the study is delimited to only those 11 government kindergartens are found in Arada sub- city. The conclusion of the study has also been drawn based on the practice, and challenges of government kindergartens in Arada sub-city.

1.6 Limitation of the study

In conducting this study the researcher faced the following problems that contribute for limitation of the study.

- I. Lack of sufficient and relevant local reference materials on the contemporary issues of the subject under study.

- II. The researcher didn't see the wider range of participants in the study like kindergartens owned by private public, and others, teacher training institutes, and etc. Hence the study may have some sort of limitations in giving more holistic and comprehensive information from different perspectives.

1.7 Operational Definition

Child care- any situation in which children are provided with an overall supervision and support in matters like health, safety and education (UNICEF)

Early Childhood Education/pre-primary School Education/Kindergarten Education- encompasses provision of education capturing through early stimulation, guidance and arrange developmental activities and opportunities before enter to primary school, yet between age 4 and 6 years.

1.8 Organization of the study

This study is organized in to five chapters, chapter one comprised background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study and definition of operational terms. The review of related literature is treated in the second chapter. This chapter presents a brief review of related studies that serve as ground and evidence to support the basic question of the study. Chapter three addresses the research design and methods, approaches, procedures and instruments that were used to achieve the purpose of the study. The fourth chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the field were organized, processed and interpreted. The last chapter treats the summary of the major finding, conclusions reached and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Historical Development of Early Childhood Care and Education

The desire for organized education of young children outside the home has long tradition. The time in which the recognition of its importance and activity of advocating towards educating young children traced as far back as 400B.C (Wills & Stegman, 1994 cited in Temesgen, 2006:6). However, particular attention was given to Plato of Greek (427-347B.C) and among those advocates of importance of organized early intervention in children's life under the guidance of trained teacher, and John Amos (1592-1670) who was the 1st person who gave emphasis to the value of play in educating children (Butler, 2001:555 cited in Temesgen, 2006:6).

Rousseau (1712-1778) of French and John Passtelozzi (1746-1827) of Swiss recognized the vital contribution of early years education for later education at earlier times. Moreover, Rousseau advocated direct experience, practical activity and learning by doing approach of education in his time.

Early childhood education as a distinct discipline had its beginning with Johan Pastalozzi (1746-1827) as the ninetieth century began. Then it can be said that early childhood education is a fairly new field though it has old roots. It has developed out of a long historical tradition. Many of the significant aspects and practices found in today's programs were suggested by philosophers, writers, and teachers of the past (Mc carthory and Houston, 1980; Feeney, Christensen, and Moraucikey 1987).

Friedrich willhelm Foebel (1782-1852) a German philosopher, like pestalozzi and so many other before him, was deeply concerned with the education of children three through six ages by opening the first kindergarten (children's garden) in 1837, he created a very great change with the emerging field of early childhood education. Froebel understand and respected the nature of young children; he accepted and believed that children learn best through active involvement, so,

he designed special play materials and introduced the idea of associating action with singing songs. Froebel's contribution to the evolution of kindergarten, as we know it today has been extremely significant (Edigar, 1998 cited in Haile, 2010:11).

Therefore, pre-school education from its beginning (in the time Froebel) employed active learning teaching methods in its practice and the implementers used this method of teaching. Some of the educational principles and practices found in today's kindergarten are out growths of Froebel's thinking and teaching supporting this idea, Bruce (1991) described that Froebel's emphasis on learning through play is strongly supported music, stories and games have continued to be significant component of kindergarten programming.

Jean Piaget's (1896-1980) work demonstrated that children in kindergarten learn through manipulation of their physical world, are perceptually-oriented, and make judgments on the basis of the way things look to them. It also provided the basis of the identification and description of a developmental growth sequence in children where each stage is characterized by special modes of thinking about and responding to the environment. Because concepts are developed from sensing and acting up on the environment, proceeds from the concrete to the symbolic, then it should follow that curricula be structured to move from the concrete to the symbolic. Since teachers understand the progression of logical thought, they are in a position to provide activities that are appropriately challenging for the child's developmental level (Whit bread, 1996 cited in Haile, 2010:12).

Maria Montessori 1870-1952 was a pediatric doctor thus a specialist in the training of disadvantaged children and those with special needs. She has done many studies on the development of childhood education through her life. After she left engineering discipline, Montessori studied medicine and work in hospitals for children. In 1897 Montessori has revelation. "I felt that mental deficiency presented chiefly a pedagogical, rather than a medical problem". (Montessori, 1870-1952, Early life in Italy).

Then she wanted to train children in preschool. Given her new insights, she began to transfer her time towards perfecting education.

She wanted to use nature in the school in order to meet the real needs of children.

She developed educational theory, which combined ideas of scholar Froebel, anthropologist Givseooe serge, French physician Jean Itard and Eduard segueing. She was often heard saying. *“I studied my children, and they taught me how to teach them.”* Montessori, 1870-1956, Early life in Italy). She believed that the learning environment was just as important as the learning itself. The optimal conditions around children allow for and support their true natural development.

Enrollment must be prepared with particular series of scientifically developed materials, the equipment that are consistently organized by subject, degree difficulty & complexity.

All materials are displayed on open shelving and freely available, independent use to stimulate their natural instincts and interest for self directing (Montessori, 1870-1952, Early life in Italy).

Montessori believed that education ought to be developmentally oriented and each child should develop in self-discipline and self-direction. Montessori trained a number of teachers how to teach children all over the world. The teacher’s role is to observe children engaged in activities that follow their own interest. The teacher determines when a child is ready for a new challenge which is followed by a lesson or presentation. She also explained that children make mistakes, they may spill something or drop food unintentionally, etc. there is no need to raise your voice. Instead calmly recognize the mistake. There is no need to blatantly point out child’s mistake; there is a way to make them realize it (Montessori, 1870-1952, Early life in Italy).

From her practice about educating children, we can understand that, the students learn through activities that involve exploration, manipulations, orders, repetition, obstruction, and communication. The teacher has to encourage children to use their senses to explore and manipulate materials in their immediate environment. The teacher’s first duty is to watch over the environment, and this takes procedures over all the rest (Ayalew 2011:11).

As Papalia and Olds(1990:335 cited in Yalew 2011:11) noted that more than 50 years, educators have recognized that children from a deprived socioeconomic background after enter school with considerable limitation of knowledge, while their parents struggling to survive, may have little time to support and recreate them. Hence, the best known compensatory preschool program called “project Head start” was established in America with the aim of providing health care, intellectual enrichment, and a supportive environment to the children of low income families could improve their every day effectiveness in dealing with the present and preparing for the future.

From the above mentioned concepts, it is possible to say that each country has its own unique historical background about the concept and importance of early childhood education. But most of the them, even the current preschool education or Kindergarten education system is highly influenced by the then pioneers' of different methodologies of educating children.

2.2 Historical Development of Early Childhood Care an Education and its current status in Ethiopia

The concept of Early Childhood Care and Education dates back to the 17th by Ethiopia philosophers Zer'a Ya'aqob and his Walda Haywat (Summar, 1986 in UNESCO IICBA, 2010:12) while others associated its development to religious education given to children at the age of four in which children learnt alphabet in church services in the medieval Ethiopia (Ibid).

Regarding the time where the stages of formal education began in the church, during the medieval period, male children began attending church services at around age 4. At these services, children began the first stages of formal education (Yalew, 2011:12).

In Ethiopia, the concept of preschool education in the modern sense is a recent phenomenon in the 20th century, Emperor Menlik II recognized the importance of improved and modern education and then he committed and achieved the establishment of the first public school called Menlik II in 1908. Likewise, eight years a head the establishment of Menlik II school, the first modern preschool was established in Dire Dawa city for the children of foreign mainly French consultants who were helping to build the first railroad in the country (Demessie, 2003 cited in Demeke 2007:181).

But Bizunesh (1993) cited in Demmissie (1996:260), Amelework (2007:11) and Aregash (2005) cited in Temesgen (2006:10) argue that the year of establishment of the first Kindergarten in Ethiopia was 1908 (as cited in Yalew 2011:13).

Since then the provision of Kindergarten education, mainly for children from well to do families, started in Addis Ababa in attachment with the then existing Schools such as English school, German school, Lycee Gebremariam and the like. But later in 1963 E.C, provision of preschool began as a community service in the major towns of the country under the Ministry of National Development and social Affairs (Demeke, 2007:180).

Demke (2007:182) praised the socialist revolution of 1966 E.C as a turning point in the history of early childhood education in Ethiopia that resulted in an establishment of an independent commission called “Ethiopian Children’s Commission” in 1973 E.C with a task of caring and educating Ethiopian children. To begin its job with the then mission, a manual for Kindergarten in Ethiopia was produced by the Commission for the first time in 1974 E.C .Further the

commission accomplished the work of advocacy and sensitization to stakeholders by preparing different seminars and workshops on health, nutrition and other related issues of children including those with special needs (National Children’s Commission, 1982 cited in Demeke 2007:182-183). After the revolution, Kindergarten expanded from urban to rural significantly in such a way that it grew in number from 77 to 912 accompanied by its enrollment growth 7,573 to 102,000 from 1975 to 1990...

Following the socialist revolution of 1974, preschool education become part of the national education policy and then is curriculum was developed for the first time (Demeke, 2007:183-184).

As a result, the increased involvement of women economic activities, the need for the facilities to care for children became increasingly evident. This need resulted in the establishment of day care centers for early care and education. To meet the demand for the teachers at this level, a preschool teacher training center called Menen, with the support of UNICEF was opened in the capital city, Addis Ababa (James L. Hoot, Judit Szente, and Belete Mebratu 2004:4).

And also contributing to the expansion of early childhood education during the socialist period was the launching of the National Literacy Campaign supported by UNESCO in the late 1970s, (James L. Hoot, Judit Szente, and Belete Mebratu 2004:4).

This progress, however, was short-lived with the change in government in 1991, most programs initiated in the previous regime where halted. The established Kindergartens in towns and cities, however, have continued to the function to date, with the name “Mewale Hitsanat”, which means Kindergarten (Demeke, 2007:184).

In spite of a short lived declination in number of kindergartens and its enrollment from 1990 to 1992, it began to boost itself starting from adoption of the new Education and Training Policy in 1994 which recognized Kindergarten education as a very important element in the early childhood and for the preparation of formal schooling (MOE, 1994:14) which actually left the program to the private sector and other nongovernmental organizations to intervene in giving access to children.

In Ethiopia ‘Pre-primary schools’, ‘kindergartens’, and ‘pre-schools’ are different names for education of children before age7, the age for primary school entry (Demeke, 2007:181).

The pre-primary education includes kindergartens, “O” class and child to child programs. This level normally involves children of ages 4-6 enrolled in the pre-primary education. Non-governmental organizations such as communities, private institutions, and faith-based organizations, are the predominant operators of kindergartens.

The government of Ethiopia introduced “O” class and child to child programs in the education system in the past few years. The government is also involved in developing curriculum, training teachers, and providing supervisory support. The enrolment of pre-primary education is increasing every year though under reporting remains a persistent issue in the kindergarten program of the pre-primary education the Annual Abstract of education statistics of Ministry of Education (MOE, 2011).

Kindergarten program

Kindergarten is part of the pre-primary education in which children aged 4-6 are involved. This program has its own curriculum, trained teachers, administrative staffs, and school compounds. Most of the kindergarten schools are operated by non-governmental organizations such as communities, private institutions, and faith-based organizations. 94 % of the enrolment in 2004 E.C (2011/12) is covered by non-government organizations.

“O” Class program

“O” class is also a part of the pre-primary education system which involves children of age 5-6 that do not have access to kindergarten.

The children of this program are coached by selected teachers from the respective primary school. Through this process the preschool child gets ready for grade one.

Child to child Program

Child to child is also a part of the pre-primary education system by which older brother or sisters (younger facilitators of grade 5/6 students) play with their younger siblings and neighbor children. The playing becomes learning as the benefiting child gets to know how for instance, to count or to differentiate colors and identify letters. Through this process the preschool child gets ready for school.

2.3 Education and Child care

A country economy depends on the competencies of its citizens and those competencies are set early in life with minimal effort to acquire desired cognitive and attitudinal development. This is possible through the provision of better nutrition, health care and mental stimulation in the earliest years of life of children (MoE, MoH & MoWA, 2010a:18; Tirussew, 2007:200).

In other words, lack of proper care & support during childhood period implies wastage of human as well as material resources for the country (UNICEF, 2001, Tirussew, 2007:200 cited in Yalew 2011:18).

Care is described by UNICEF as “ ensuring and promoting children’s survival, protection, growth and development in good health with proper nutrition in safe environment that enables them to be physically healthy , mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn” (UNICEF 2003:15-16 in Taylor Woods, 2005:117).

Moreover, from economic point of view access to quality early childhood care and education is a proper pro-poor strategy capable of increasing equity in addition to its usefulness for the holistic development of a child and realizing their right (Woodhead et al., 2009:1)

Child-centered, family-focused, community –based holistic care and education of preschool children is essential for securing the well being and rights of all children and should be supported by national policies and sufficient funds (Yemane, 2007:36).

In complete with these, Woodhead (2009:5) in his review tried to put the contribution of the government of Ethiopia towards the provision of early education as:

The role of the government in providing pre-school services has been minimal. This is not surprising. Primary education is still being consolidated in Ethiopia, and current public expenditure is still insufficient to ensure even basic primary schools, especially many isolated communities. To fill this gap at pre-primary level, the government is encouraging the involvement of other partners, including the private sector.

According to the Annual Abstract of education statistics of Ministry of Education (MOE, 2011), In 2004 E.C. (2011/12) out of the estimated 7.51 million children of the appropriate age group (age 4-6) about 1.62 million children have been reported to have access to pre-primary education all over the country. Though the enrolment is small when compared to the appropriate age group, gross enrolment rate is higher than the previous year by about 16.4 percentage point. This increase is due to the improved reporting of “O” class and child to child data in the year 2004 E.C. (2011/12), which was not considered in previous years. Moreover, it is expected that the gross enrolment rate could be higher than the figure indicated because data from several kindergartens may not have been collected. Had it not been with the addition of enrolment from “O” class and child to child, the gross enrolment in 2004 E.C. (2011/12) for pre-primary education could have been 5.3%.

Even though Addis Ababa has got a relatively good coverage of kindergarten education as compared to other regional states, still the coverage and service delivery is not as such satisfactory. As the Education Annual statistics Abstract of Addis Ababa Education Bureau (AACAEB, 2011) indicates, the net enrollment rate in kindergarten education is 68.0% in 2010/11. This shows that 32% of the children did not get access to kindergarten at their appropriate age (i.e. 4-6).

The Ministry of Education stated standards of pre-school education such as the teacher children ratio should be 2:40 (a main teacher and an assistant teacher in a class); a pre-school must have outdoor play materials like different size balls, skipping ropes, foam Javelin, gymnastic mat, multiple purpose mats, large and small mobile toys, tricycle and small care tires.

In addition, a pre-school need to have outdoor play equipments namely, swinging, merry-ground, slide, balance, boxes, crawling tunnels and climbing.

Further a pre-school need to have child sized tables, and chairs and other indoor equipments and materials (MoE, 1987 E.C).

Hence indoor to carry on effective teaching learning process, the pre-schools need to have trained and adequate human power and indoor and outdoor facilitates according to the above stated standards.

Education primarily plays a role in changing the attitude, skill, and knowledge of an individual throughout life. As different findings suggest, particularly early childhood care and education plays a crucial role in the future prospect of a child, the society and the nation as a whole is

important for individual educational and social progress as well as national economic development.

A large body of evidence from social science, psychology and neuroscience, demonstrates the importance of early years for later development. Investments in human capital yield the highest returns in the pre-school stage. Further to this, where children do not get a good start in life, early intervention is essential as schools are generally ill-equipped to remedy a bad start. (Esping-Andersen, Gosta 2007). Studies of the relative return on skills investment in early life show that ‘investments yield the highest returns in the pre-school stage (0-6) and decline exponentially thereafter...the returns are especially high for underprivileged children. (Ibid).

According to Esping-Andersen, G. (2008), there is strong evidence that once a child falls behind, they are likely to remain behind and so, to some extent, the basis for future learning and social and emotional development is set before children start school. Thus, the foundations of policy lie in the realization that learning abilities are formed during the first years of childhood. In addition, the family is the key influence on young children, and some initiatives are focused on families. It sets out a range of measures to assist parents in supporting their child’s education, especially in the early years. However, while the home environment has a greater effect on children than outside care, the opportunities for policymakers to exert influence are fewer. It is argued that, even if it agreed that familial ‘cultural capital’ is crucial, it would appear difficult to conceive of a policy that corrects for differences in parenting quality and dedication.

The attention and the love they give to children; the way they understand, deal and manage children; the quality of their interaction with children have far reaching implications in the wellbeing of children. This lays the foundation for human capital development across countries and ensures development, peace and stability in the continent. (TirussewTeferra, 2012:11)

A National Study on Early Childhood Care and Education in Ethiopia (Tirussew T. et al, 2008) captured the following useful and harmful cultural practices across the country.

Useful practices

- Breast feeding(lactating), strong emotional attachment/ and frequent physical contact particularly with the mother,
- The involvement of the extended family , the neighbors and the community in child care and development,
- The practice of local adoption of abandoned children “ Gudifecha” ,
- Sibling take-caring (older children taking care for the younger children particularly girls)
- Availability of children stories, games, locally prepared playing materials and storytelling practices as well as fascinated methods of posing riddles etc.

Harmful practices

- Milk teeth extraction, tonsillectomy, female genital mutilation, mutilation of the skin on the forehead, eyebrow of their babies etc.,
- Prevalence of corporal punishment at home and in schools,
- Verbal abuse such as yelling, deploring, cursing, terrifying & chastising for shaping children’s behaviors,
- Existence of domestic and out/side home child labor,
- Discouraging children from sitting and discussing with adults ,
- Practice of early marriage, abduction and child labor,
- Limited role of fathers on early child care and development, and
- Large family size lack of family planning tradition. (Tirussew Teferra,2012:5-6)

According to UNESCO (2007/8:1) summary report Early Childhood care and Education is defined as the support for children's survival, growth, development, and learning from birth to the time of entry in to primary school in formal, informal, and non-formal settings. As we can see from the above definition, the concept of ECCE is wide and vast which cannot be with hold only by those in the education sector only.

Cognizant of this fact, ECCE policy Framework (MoE, MoH, & MoWA 2010a:310) has identified the major tasks of the education sector as the preparation of policy guide lines, provision of training to teachers & certifying them, developing play and teaching materials, maintaining and supplying quality standards along with assurance of quality curriculum development, supervision support together with coordinating other partners and stakeholders in both governmental and nongovernmental sectors.

According to the ECCE policy Framework in Ethiopia (MoE, MoH, & MoWA, 2010a:32) it is responsible of Ministry of Women's & Child Affairs to promote the protection, care, right, and welfare of children indiscrimination of any form of traits or variables together with mobilizing resources for the establishment of pre-schools and eradicating harmful practices that inhibit the development of a child.

So, in our case, all relevant sectors, professionals and stakeholders in particular the current women and child Affairs Ministry should work together especially with the Education sector Ministry and in particular to kindergartens, schools so that children particularly from low income and destitute families can have access legal and rights protection from any form of abuse anywhere at any time (Yalew 2011:35).

2.4 Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education

The precise meaning of education quality and the path to improvement of quality are often left unexplained and are controversial. However, examined within context, education quality apparently may refer to quality impute (number of qualified teachers, number of text books and its content relevance), quality process (amount of direct instructions time accompanied by active learning) quality outputs (tests, scores, graduation rates), and quality outcome (employment, ability creating new jobs and its overall performance in their subsequent activities) Yalew (2011:22).

There is an increasing amount of national and international evidence to show that quality early childhood education has a positive long-term effect upon children's later development.

Governments, worldwide, have at last begun to recognize that early childhood education matters. However, successful quality early education is more than providing children with a few facts or cognitive skills; it is about empowering children and providing them with the opportunity to 'learn how to learn'. It is also about providing children with the resources to deal with challenges and failure and to help them understand that achievement is as much about persistence and motivation as it is about intelligence. (Audrey Curtis and Maureen O'Hagan, 2003).

(Adams, 1998 cited in Adams & Champam 2002:2) explained additionally quality education may imply simply the attaining of specified targets and objectives. More comprehensive views are also found, and interpretation of quality may be based on an institution, the extent to which schooling has influenced change in student knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (Ibid). Yalew (2011:22).

Early childhood education is playing a major (and increasing) role in shaping many children's lives and their future, including in developing countries where basic education services are still

being consolidated. But early education service is often of vary variables quality, as are the school classrooms to which children progress (Woodhead et al, 2007:79).

It is questionable whether simply extending the number of years children spend in low quality, often over crowded, badly equipped classrooms , is their best interests, especially when their teachers are poorly trained, underpaid, and absent, and children complain being beaten (Ibid). However, the presence of inadequate facilities, insufficient training of teachers, shortage of books and other teaching materials are identified to be key impediment of providing quality education in the Ethiopian context (MoE, 1994:2-3) through the problem persists still today.

Virtually the quality and standard of education is a given country mainly determined by the essence of its curriculum and the process of its implementation (World Bank, 1999:7 cited Solomon, 2010:24 cotton and conklia, 2001 cited in Gezahegne, 2005:4). A well planned curriculum points to quality.

The curriculum is a long range plan of activities and experiences for children (Stephens, 1996 :).

According to piaget –a theorist, the best strategy for preschool curriculum is to keep children curious, make them wonder, and after then real problem solving challenges, rather than giving them information which emphasizes children’s learning more internal than interactive (Mooney, 2000:62). However, Vygotsky believed that the interaction had a huge impact on cognitive development of a child. Additionally, the provision of acceptable quality depends on two determining factors i.e. adequate system of school management and a reliable information system enabling the operation of the education at local level to be monitored (World Bank, 1999:9 cited in Solomon, 2010:25).

The recognition and provision of quality of early childhood care and education (ECCE) has been a critical issue, and has so remained as a current developmental agenda of several countries. (Tirussew, 2012:1)

According to the UNESCO-FFA (2007), Global Monitoring summary report suggested on matters of quality that as the single most important determinant of ECCE quality is interaction between children and staff, with a focus on the needs of the child. This requires reasonable working condition, such as low child/staff ratios and adequate materials. Continuing in staffing, curriculum and parental involvement ease the transition to primary school. Quality improvements in the early years of schooling are needed to better accommodate young children from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Research shows that high-quality, intensive early care and education programs for low-income children can have lasting positive effects such as greater school success, higher graduation rates, lower juvenile crime, decreased need for special education services later, and lower adolescent pregnancy rates. At the same time, low-quality care can have harmful effects on language, social development, and school performance that are more difficult to ameliorate, especially for children in schools with fewer resources. The positive effects from high-quality programs and the negative effects from poor-quality programs are magnified for children from disadvantaged situations or with special needs, and yet these children are least likely to have access to quality early care and education. (Pediatrics, 2005: 187 -191).

As a result, the issues of quality are many and mandatory by this contemporary world competency and profit from early investment is ultimately the result of quality input, process, and output which may, mean in the mean time, incur huge cost in human, material and financial resources accompanied by the proper utilization of time again demand strong commitment and coordination activities at all levels in all pertinent bodies. Recognizing of all these facts; this time, Ethiopia, is exerting much effort, as far as possible, by giving due emphasis to all aspects of quality of education like in revising the curriculum, fulfilling inputs (human, material and financial) and monitoring learning processes in cooperation with different stakeholders starting from early childhood to higher level in the education system (Yalew,2011:24).

2.5 Physical setting and classroom environment in pre- schools

2.5.1 Physical setting of pre-school

It is generally accepted that the richer and more pleasant pre-school environment provides more opportunities for a child to explore, experiment, plan, and make discussions for them, thereby enabling them to progress in their learning and development (promoting Good practice, no date).

A good environment for children must be safe physically as well as psychologically (Feeney et al., 1987). In line with this, Curtis (1998) also explained that children are active learners in well-prepared, safe and secure learning environment. Mayers (1990) with the same concept strengthened this idea by stating that the cognitive development of infants living in environments with little variety is generally lower than that of infants living in the environment that contain variety (cited in Haile,2010:23)

According to Chowdhury and Chuoldhury (2002), some of the criteria suggested for site and building of pre-school are the following:

1. Site

- The pre-school, must be located away from the crowded areas of the city/town, burial ground and main traffic for the purpose of children's safety.
- The vicinity must also be as to permit any future expansion
- A raised area, dry, and have natural drainage free from water logging

- Clean, pleasant, and well maintained building.

In line with this, Curtis (1998 cited in Haile, 2011:24) explained that a basic need of all young children is space. The space to move freely within the environment is of particular importance for children living in urban areas where many are housed in high risk flat or in cramped conditions with little or no outdoor play space.

Moreover, Chowdhury and Chuoldhury (2002) explained that in a pre-school equally important are the factors to be care of with regards to the rooms, floors, walls, and doors, sanitary facilities, and ventilation.

2. Building

- I. The building should be planned to confirm to the laws of sanitation, hygiene, ventilation, and lightening
- II. A single story building is preferable for convenience and safety for the small children
- III. The building should fulfill the minimum requirement of playrooms, lavatories, washrooms, and storage space; and
- IV. There must be some open for the outdoor play activities are the school building

3. Classroom physical Environment

The physical environment of classroom has a profound effect on individual child the group as a whole and on the others.

The physical environment include the size of the room, the color of the walls, the type of flooring, the number of windows (the creative curriculum for pre-school, no date), Feeney et al.,(1987) suggested that classroom environment includes organized space in to interest centers. This may include areas of art, science, blocks, books, dramatic play, sensory materials, music, woodworking, and manipulative toys and games. In addition to these, library, discovery, sand and water, cooking and computers are components of classroom environment (the creative curriculum for pre-school, no date, Cited in Haile, 2010:26)

4. Equipments and Materials

Equipments and materials make the bones of pre-school education program. It gives children first-hand experience.

Hence, to promote children's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development, it is necessary to provide appropriate equipments and materials for variety of activities. It should be wide ranging with natural and manufactured objectives (Bruce, 1997).

According to Iseberg and Jalongo (1993 cited in Haile,2010:27), among the major categories of materials of great significance for pre-school children include skill and concept materials (simple car games, books of varies types and puzzles); from gross motor materials (balls, pull toys, riding toys, etc); manipulative materials (building sets, markers, pencils, scissors, etc); constructional materials (blocks, building sets, and wood working materials): self-expressive materials (dolls, dress-up clothes, housekeeping toys, and musical instruments) and natural materials(sticks, leaves, rocks, sand, mud, water etc). Of indoor equipment, chairs must be of such weight and design that can be carried out easily and safely about the room by children. It should permit the child to sit comfortably in relaxed position. Tables, which are square and wide enough to allow children to work opposite each other, encourage conversation and appreciate of the work of others required child-sized and open shelves make it easy for children to have toys and books they need when they need them (Heffernar and Todd 1960; Foster and headly, 1959).

In general, it is accepted and agreed that the richer and more pleasant pre-school environment provides more opportunities for children learning. Therefore, the pre-school should fulfils at least minimum required standard of environmental condition (site, building, physical setting and the equipment as well as materials) in order to achieve the desired result which is expected of pre-school age children.

5. Outdoor learning environment

The physical environment of pre-school has a profound effect on individual learning. In support of this, Curtis (1998 as cited in Haile, 2010:27) stated that the physical organization of the indoor space is important but no pre-school environment is complete without taking in to account the

outdoor area since together they make a total learning environment, which caters for every child's interests and provides materials that will be appropriate for the level of development of each child.

Many of the skills and competencies which develop during those early years are learned from the outdoor natural environment children will gain more from digging in the garden and watching worms and insects than they will from looking at pictures.

Moreover, Studer (1998 as cited in Haile, 2010:27) explains that the outdoor environment can offer rich learning experiences not found indoors. The play yard is full of wonderful things for to experiment, discover, and explore. In a well-planned outdoor environment; children do much more than run, climb, and ride bikes. They notice the weather, insects, plants, and everything going on around them. Their curiosity is stimulated as they seek answers to their questions about new discoveries.

The outdoor is also the ideal place to provide experiences that are sometimes considered too messy to do indoors sensory experiences such as measuring floor or mixing sand and water can be more fully explored without the limits of the indoor classroom. For the pre-school child, the freedom to use materials without restriction, always leads to greater levels and understanding (Studer, 1998).

Likewise, Curtis (1998:111), suggested "the main requirements of outdoor play area to facilitate learning primarily it must be safe and secure with ample space for the children to play freely, preferably with trees, flat grass areas and bushes where children can hide-and-seek and play in the mud." If the pre-school is attached to an elementary or secondary school then it is important that the play area is separated from the older children. The outdoor equipments should provide children with a wide variety of opportunities for active physical experience wood, boxes, crates, planks, and so on will enable children to build interesting structures which will serve as triggers to imaginative play.

A minimum area of square meter of play space per child is desirable. If several groups of children use the area and the space is limited, a schedule for using the play ground should be provided so that not all children are outdoors at the same time (Chowdhury and Choudhury, 2002). Concerning the play ground safety, Sawyers (1994 as cited in Haile, 2010:28), suggested seven points as follows:

1. Play ground equipment should be six feet away from fences and buildings;
2. Place shock absorbent material under equipment and extending six feet beyond.
3. Gates should have a safety latch;
4. Remove poisonous plants, litter and insect nets
5. Check equipment for sharp edges, missing or loss parts, or deteriorated, splintered wood;
6. Cover a sandbox when not in use; and
7. A minimum of two teachers be on the play ground at all times

To ensure the safety of children (Chowdhury and Choudhury, 2002) recommended a nursery school or pre-school must have a play ground close to the building. The outdoor play space and play ground must be safe and secure for the children to play freely. It should be free from nails, rocks, broken parts and edges, and glass places. The area should be well-fenced, drained, and surface materials should be appropriate for the activities in the area.

Developmentally appropriate play grounds include a variety of equipments and materials selected on the basis of the age characteristics and individual differences in abilities of the users selected materials and equipment must support the types of play we observe in children (Sawyers, 1994 as cited in Haile, 2010:29).

Moreover, outside play allows for more active play with fewer restrictions on noise and movement, and greater freedom with natural materials like water, sand, snow, and soil. Also children revel in the variety inherent in the seasonal changes.

The benefits of outdoor play are maximized when developmentally appropriate equipment and materials are combined with adult supervision to support child initiated learning (Sawyers, 1994 as cited in Haile, 2010:29).

In general, the outdoor learning environment plays a great role for the child in the overall development when the play ground design is developmentally appropriate and adult follow up is continuous for every activities of every child.

2.5.2 Classroom environment

As Montessori (1870-1952) & Joan Belk (2005) explained the physical environment of the classroom may need to be modified to the welcoming of all students. Further may need to be re-arranged to provide more space for path ways for children in wheelchair. Teachers should be active mobilizes to the settlement of safe classroom environment. The environment should let them play unreservedly (Ayalew, 2011:34)

In this aspect Hertzberg and stone (1971) cited in Begna (2010:22) stated the following:

If classroom is well organized, a child can find what he needs to work with. If the room is filled with beauty, a child can learn to care for and value beautiful things. If supplies are readily available, the child learns to choose and share. If a variety of materials are available, then the child learns something about making intelligent choices. If adults show respect for and trust in the child, he will learn to experiment without fear or failure. Both the physical and the emotional elements of the environment influence learning. There is vast difference between a child and living in a warm, welcoming environment and simply “going to school”

Above all, to make the pre-school learning environment child friendly and support the learning an holistic development of the child, teachers and their aides together with the relevant management group need to have appropriate skills, knowledge, awareness and commitment which ultimately requires to have appropriate in training and refreshment (Yalew 2011:24).

2.6 Training and adequacy of pre-school teachers.

Pre-school teachers play a critical role in the development of the children. There is general agreement today that teachers of young children need to be involved in all areas of child's development (Social, emotional, intellectual and physical). (Feeney et al, 1987 cited in Yalew 2011:16).

Similarly, Chowdhury and Choudhury (2002) explain that the role of pre-school teachers and other care givers influence the development of children more than any specific curriculum or educational methodology and they are also responsible for immediate ,face to face care (physical and psychological) of the children.

Feeney et al. (1987) indicated that the job of pre-school teachers is varying and challenging; it demands knowledge, skill, sensitivity and creativity. Likewise, Miller and McDowelle (1993); further explained the need for basic knowledge in the area of health and nutrition, pedagogy, curriculum development, handling of interpersonal and inter group relations with children, parents, specialists and colleagues. On the same /vein, woodfield (2004) stressed the fact that preschool teachers need to have knowledge and understanding of:

- ❖ All aspects of children development including theories and approaches to learning;
- ❖ How to combine and apply pedagogical knowledge and understanding;
- ❖ Multi-sensory learning and teaching approaches for young children; and
- ❖ Safety issues and application in practice

In addition to the above points Marguaruta and Cohen (1984), explained that the professional training in pre-school education includes: curriculum and methods, school-parents relationships, materials and equipment experiences and recourses, current problems, history, philosophy of education and the administration and organization of schools.

The training of pre-school teachers varies from country to country. The training ranges from two years or more in diploma and degree levels to less than one year in certificate.

In general, the training of pre-school teachers is critical for the pre-school program implementation. Because it is what goes to the training institution of pre-school teachers that is particular in classroom that finally affects children's learning in pre-schools. (Yalew 2011:17)

According to Chowdhury and Choudhury (2002), there are several basic requirements of pre-school teachers such as:-

- Should be at least 18 years old-matured enough to handle young children;
- Should be healthy enough to perform all duties safety and should have no disease that could be communicated to the children;

- Must be willing and able to carry out the activities required by the curriculum;
- Must be able to work with children without using physical or psychological punishment;
- Be willing and able to increase her/his skills and competence through experience, training, and supervision;
- Be very progressive and enthusiastic, always to work for the development and welfare of the children;
- Be academically well trained and qualified. Preferably training in early childhood education, or child development or child psychology;
- Be preferably women to deal with the young children with their soft and motherly affection;
- Be a good “house keeper” both indoors and outdoors so that the school is always clean and attractive: and
- Be enthusiastic and enjoy being with the children relax and smile on the whole, personal characteristics of pre-school teachers, either enhance or diminish the implementation of the pre-school education as intended.

Taking these facts in to consideration, the Ethiopia government in its education policy has given due emphasis about the importance of teacher training and competence is the medium of instruction from the kindergarten to higher education under article 3.4.5.of 1994 Education and Training Policy.

Moreover, UNESCO (2007/8:13) report indicates that the trainees of Kotebe College of Teacher Education get ten months certificate training; while training at the private preschool teachers training institutes train pre-school teachers between three to ten months by showing its concern about the inconsistencies of the training time.

In the end, adequate training of teachers and care givers in ECCE program is a mandatory component for the overall development of children at their own setting. Furthermore, according to the report mentioned above, the allotted and utilized time discrepancies in the training of teachers at pre-school level between the private and government training institutes should be harmonized and given due emphasis from all sides of concerned bodies.(Yalew,2011:25)

2.7 Methods of teaching in pre-school

Children arrive at school with different backgrounds, experiences, and at different stages of development. To give each student the best possible start, it is essential that pre-school programs provide a variety of method of teaching and instructional experiences. (Haile, 2010:20)

According to Chowdhury and Choudhury (2002), play as “It is part and parcel of a child’s life, Play is a fun, Children without fun, children without play, is children without childhood.” The right to play is truly a basic right for each child.

Whatever the social or economic situation may be, indeed fostering of play is clearly a part of preventive medicine.

Furthermore, (Sawyers, 1994) explained that Play help children develop knowledge, social skills, and motor skill. It also helps those express feelings appropriately (as cited in Haile 2010:20).

Also believed that play helps children to prepare for adult life by letting them, in natural way, practice and explore what they will need to be able to do as adults. According to Aggarwall (2006:153), “play is the purest, most spiritual activity of the child and gives joy, freedom, contentment, inner rest and peace in the world. It is the source of all that is good”.

Hence, most scholars agreed that play is the first and most appropriate method of teaching in kindergarten or pre-school (Saracho, 1993; Curtis, 1998; Feeney et al, 1987; Bruce, 1991; Wall, 1975 cited in Haile 2010:20).

There are other appropriate method of teaching suitable for facilitating pre-school child’s development and learning besides play children enjoy and benefit from short group sessions during which they learn to listen to each other and the teacher singing together, listen to stories and develop a sense of time by remembering what they have done and planning ahead learning centers are sometimes design to focus children’s attention on concept, process or skill and provide opportunity for self-initiated investigation and practice. Children benefit from well planned field trips and learn much from subsequently guided discussion. The most preferred approaches are those that build on the children’s interests and self-initiated activities (Saracho, 1993 cited in Haile, 2010:20-23) summarizes method of teaching in pre- school as follows;

I. Brain storming

This large or small activity encourages children to focus on a topic and contributed to the free flow of ideas. The teacher may begin posing a question or a problem or by introducing a topic students then expressed possible answers, relevant words or ideas contribution are accepted without criticism or judgment. Initially, some students may be reluctant to speak out in a group setting, but brain storming is an open sharing activity which encourages all children to participate. By expressing ideas and listening to what others say, students adjust their previous knowledge or understanding accommodates new information and increases their levels of awareness.

II. Categorizing

Categorizing involves grouping objects or ideas according to criteria that describe common features or the relationship among all members of that group. This procedure enables students to see patterns and connections; it develops students' abilities to manage or organize information

III. choral speaking

In this activity, students are involved in the oral interpretation of literature. Choral speaking refers to experience in which students recite passages from memory. This activity allows students to deepen their understanding and enjoyment of literature by experimenting with elements of voice (tempo, volume, pitch, stress and juncture), movement and gestures within supportive environment.

Students are according to interpret poems and stories by exploring the elements of voice and movement the support of additional voices, all students experience success.

IV. Conference

Conference provides opportunities for students and teachers to discuss a drawing experience or project and to plan future learning experience. As teachers conference" with individual students or small groups, other class members continue with their activities.

Teachers learn a great deal about students and their learning in conferences. As students discuss their success and difficulties, teachers can guide students to resources relevant to their interests

and needs, or challenging activities

V. Cooperative learning

Cooperative learning involves students working together to complete a task or project pairs usually work best in kindergarten. The task is structured in such a way that involvement of each member contributes to completion of the task. Success is based on the performance of the pair rather than on the performance of each individual.

Cooperative learning stresses interdependence and promotes. Cooperation rather than competition, establishing and maintaining cooperative group norms develops the concept of a community of learners.

VI. Discussions

A discussion is an oral exploration of a topic, object, concept or experience. All learners need frequent opportunities to generate and share their questions and ideas are small and whole class settings. Teachers who encourage and accept students' question and comments without judgment and clarify understanding by paraphrasing difficult terms stimulate the exchange of ideas.

VII. Guided Discussion

- Guided discussions begin with teacher posed questions that promote the exploration of a particular theme, topic or issue
- Through discussion, students should achieve a deeper understanding of the topic.
- After some time is spent on teacher-directed questioning, students should be encouraged to facilitate discussion by continuing to formulate and pose questions appropriate to the topic of study.

VIII. Reading Environmental print

Through the incorporation of this strategy, students and teachers explore print and its many functions using materials that are readily available in immediate environment. Students should be encouraged to add to collections and classroom displays of environmental print. These displays should change and expand to include materials related to specific themes of study, students' interests and experiences, and community events.

Hence, it can be said that play, categorizing, environmental print, brainstorming, choral speaking, conferences, cooperative learning, discussions, guided discussions are some of the teaching methods in pre-school education.

2.8 Curriculum of pre-school education

Pre-school curriculum should follow and incorporate play as teaching method as Chazzan (2002) explained positive view of the functions of play

Playing and growing are synonymous with life itself; playfulness be speaks creativity and action change and responsibility of transformation. Play activity thus reflects the very existence of the self, that part of the organism that exists both independently and interdependently, that can reflect up on itself and be aware of its own existence. In being playful the child attains a degree of autonomy sustained by representations of his inner and outer worlds (as cited in wood and attfield, 2005:2).

Here allowing children to play helps than to explore their immediate environment. They develop self confidence and it evokes creativity, relaxing. So early childhood education should base teaching by play.

In line with this, the developmental characteristics of children of pre-school age call for the curriculum that involves a variety and balance of activities that can be provided in the context of project work (Katz and Chard, 1989 as cited in Haile, 2010:15). They further noted that, a good curriculum provides activities that include.

- ✚ Opportunities for children to learn by observing and experimenting with real objects;
- ✚ Balance of child-and teacher initiated activities;
- ✚ Group projects in which cooperation an occur naturally;
- ✚ A range of activities requiring the use of large and small muscles;
- ✚ Exposure to good literature and music of children’s own cultures and of other cultures represented in the class;

- ✚ Authentic assessment of each child's developmental progress;
- ✚ Opportunities for children with diverse backgrounds and developmental levels to participate in the whole group activities ; &
- ✚ Time for individuals or small groups of children to meet with teachers for specific help in acquiring basic reading, writing, mathematical and other skills as need.

Similarly, Miller and Mc Dowelle (1993 as cited in Haile, 2010:16) suggested that quality curriculum in pre-school education demonstrates the following:

- ✓ It organized around central themes abilities and personalities
- ✓ Employs sound and consistent assessment and documentation procedures: and
- ✓ Integrates objectives, methods, material as well as implemented by teachers who have formal training and experiences.

2.9 Parent's and pre- school teachers', and community's relationship

2.9.1 Parent's and pre-school teachers' relationship

As mentioned by Chowdhury and choudhury (2002) "parents play a major role in a successful pre-school education through proper understanding of their children and assisting them as when required". Parents also try to understand the child's natural curiosity and accordingly allow him or her to explore, investigate and learn freely, they also furthermore, explained that home and school are two worlds for pre-school children, where total development takes place and home-school relationships have an essential role to play in promoting children's educational progress.

Parents and teachers must work together for better understanding of each other, guided the children cooperatively for more improved welfare of them. Home-school relationship can be improved through, home visits, parents, interviews, and meetings, parents participation in school programs and developing material for parents.

Here we can understand how home environment should be similar to pre-school; mean that the parents should treat children as their teacher or the parents should handle as pre-school teachers help them how to assist children after school. The successful education of children with special needs is dependent up on the full involvement for their parents; indeed, unless the parents are seen as equal partners in the pre-school educational process will not success. Generally there should be interaction between the school and the home.

In addition, pre-school teachers recognize that parents are the first and most influential teachers of children and invite them to be partners in the teaching learning process. Pre-school teachers must work cooperatively with parents to establish effective communication links between home and the school. Open communication with the parents about the child is essential throughout the year. Growth and development of children's share to parents through a variety of methods;

- Notes
- Telephone calls
- Sending homework samples
- classroom visitation
- conferences
- report card

(Early Beginnings-Kindergarten Curriculum guide, no date)

The MOE (2009) give the responsibility to parents and care givers as they are important persons to inculcate life principals, spiritual and moral values development. But when we see experience of some parents they do not pay attention to education of their children. They simply leave the responsibility to teachers only; in relation to this idea Haile (2010:71) state "The parent involvement in the pre-schools has been low as compared to the numbers of children found in pre-schools. Limited numbers of parents have made contact with the teachers about their children's learning."

2.9.2 Community's and pre-school teachers' relationship

The preschool educational system can promote holistic child development through supporting comprehensive programs with active involvement of families and communities supplemented with the provision of health care and nutritious food so that the quality of the service increases to meet the intended objectives (Egle,pl.,et al 2007 in Yalew,2011:31).

Schools that communicate with their external publics in some organized way enhance their chance of getting better public support, minimizing criticism, learning the values and priorities of

a community and receiving many functional ideas that will help them educate students better (Bagin & Donold,2001, cited again in Yalew, 2011:33).

The child learners much according to the environment in which he finds himself. Hence, communities in their localities have a responsibility to make environments safe and conducive to children in their early years of development.

The community has the power to organize school families, the state and other social institutions for the education of the individual or its members.

Cognizant of the above mentioned values of community participation, Ethiopia has emphasized the contribution of communities in its ECCE framework (MoE, MoH, MoWA, 2010a:30) as:

The community supports of parents' efforts in providing for the child's holistic needs. It makes support services available for the young children and provides a protective environment and physical facilities. The community safeguards the children's rights and mobilizes resources to enhance their holistic development. It sets the social norms that guide parents in socializing their children and inculcating spiritual and moral values and life principles. It addresses the needs of disadvantaged children within the locality, advocates for services for young children and links them to other service providers.

The community also initiates and manages community-based services for young children, provides alternative and complementary approaches in care, health, and nutrition and generally supports parents and other care givers in meeting children's health, care and nutritional and developmental needs. (Yalew, 2011:33)

2.10 Opportunities and Challenges of Early Childhood Care and Education in pre- schools in Ethiopia

The importance of early childhood care and education (ECCE) is now widely accepted in international research and development policy.

More than half of the world's children are still excluded from pre-primary education, with high-income children more likely than low-income children to attend in many countries.

Some groups of children are more vulnerable than others, and therefore more services may be needed to ensure their development.

The Ethiopian government has designed a national framework for ECCE (2010). Within this framework, the state would regulate existing private sector provision. It would also begin to

provide low-cost ECCE programmes through extending existing government primary schools to provide a reception year. Where this is not possible, some older primary school pupils would be trained as Child-to-Child facilitators in a programme of play designed to improve the readiness of younger children to start school. But there is extremely limited government and donor funding available for the plans in the framework. The implementation of ECCE risks placing a significant burden on an already overstretched primary education system. (Young Lives in Ethiopia, 2012:1)

Ethiopia offers a case study of the opportunities and challenges in developing early care and education (ECCE) services in low-resource settings. The country has been viewed as a success story of Education For All, with the number of children out of school reduced from nearly four in five in 1992 to one in five in 2009. But there are significant challenges in improving the quality of education provision, and an intense focus on primary education has resulted in relatively little attention to ECCE (Young Lives in Ethiopia, 2012)

There is a strong rural-urban division in ECCE provision. In urban areas, there is a diversity of non-governmental providers. Wealthier parents tend to use private preschools, while many poorer parents use faith-based facilities. In rural areas, the private and non-governmental sectors provide very few pre-schools. The coverage and quality of rural ECCE provision is low because government primary school systems are still being consolidated and lack the resources to offer pre-schooling.

Although overall levels of ECCE provision in Ethiopia are low, there are diverse providers. Most are located in urban areas, giving urban families different choices and opportunities for accessing ECCE (Young Lives in Ethiopia, 2012).

Types of ECCE providers

- **Private schools** are fee-paying. They are usually replicas of primary schools, with uniforms, academic lessons and sometimes instruction in English.

- **Public schools** are partly funded by government and partly by student fees. Facilities and the quality of service provision are more like private schools than government schools.
- **Government pre-schools** are mostly in urban areas but include a small number of reception classes attached to primary schools in both rural and urban areas. Teachers are paid from student fees and community contributions.
- **Community schools** are run by nongovernmental providers. They include **NGO schools** which charge low or no fees if they are targeting poor communities.

Young Lives in Ethiopia (2012) explained that the introduction of the ECCE policy framework in 2010 marks significant progress. It offers the promise of ambitious increases in ECCE access but to date it is unclear how this will be resourced.

Cost savings are anticipated by drawing heavily on the existing primary school system. But risks attach to this proposal. Expecting the primary education system to take major operational responsibility for ECCE in rural areas, without additional resources, risks burden a structure which is already overstretched. For ECCE to provide benefits, it may be worthwhile investing in longer-term, proven strategies to provide high-quality ECCE programmes rather than attempting to score quick wins through improvements in access.

Much of the evidence of the benefits of ECCE comes from smaller-scale, relatively well-funded community based programmes. Scaling-up needs to be adequately planned and resourced for ECCE to achieve maximum potential for children.

According to Young Lives in Ethiopia, (2012) the following could assist in ensuring the success of the framework:

- ❖ A strategy and funding to train a cadre of ECCE teachers, to deploy them across rural and urban areas and to pay them enough to keep them in the system.
- ❖ A national curriculum, with technical support and structures to ensure compliance across the range of providers in the sector.

- ❖ In rural areas, alternative structures for ECCE that rely less on primary schools, such as community-based schools not attached to pre-schools, or Rapid School Readiness Programmes.

- ❖ In urban areas, structures to ensure that poorer children can access non-government providers, either through direct subsidy to providers in poor communities or vouchers issued to parents. In the long term, the government's ECCE framework offers a real opportunity to provide universal, low-cost and quality ECCE in Ethiopia. But if the framework is to deliver the full benefits of ECCE, it must be carefully phased in and provided with sufficient resources.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The major purpose of this research is assessing practices and challenges of ECCE in eleven selected government kindergartens in Arada Sub-city. To achieve this purpose descriptive survey approach was employed in this study. In this study both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were employed. But greater emphasis was given to the quantitative approach.

3.2 Source of data

The primary and secondary sources were consulted to obtain information about the subject under study. The primary sources were kindergarten teachers, principals, parents, pre-primary education expert at city administration, & Sub-City level and the pre-primary school themselves.

The secondary sources are reports, plans, and different documents like policy, directives, standards and other relevant documentations used at all levels of the administrative hierarchy.

3.3 Sample and sampling Techniques

Arada Sub-City constituted 55 kindergartens from those 13 governments, 6 public, 23 private, 6 community, 6 church and 1 charitable organization kindergartens and out of these 55 kindergartens the researcher selected 11 kindergartens. The study site has relatively large number of children, access of pre-primary schools, low economic background of the parent and the community. Particularly the sub-city was selected purposively because all are government kindergartens, and due to the researcher has worked for many years in that operational area and close work relationship with kindergartens and it is believed that data collection could be easy.

All teachers of targeted kindergartens and school principals were included. On the other hand, kindergartens for observation along with centers and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) of parents were selected randomly among the samples of the population to make it manageable in

such a way that it can represent the targeted population. Moreover, pre-primary education experts from Addis Ababa city Administration Education Bureau and from the targeted sub city were purposely included to participate in providing information through interview since they are the ones that have got strong attachment to the programme implementation due to their responsibility.

The selected list of kindergartens is indicated here below

Table-1 Sample Kindergartens

Sub-City	Name of Kindergartens
Arada	Africa Andenet No.1 Africa Andenet No.2 Arbegnoch Atse Fasil Dagmawi Minilik Ethiopia Tikidem No. 1 Genet J.F.Kennedy Key Kokebe Melekam Ermejachen Ras Abebe Aregay

Source: Arada Sub-City Education Bureau

3.4 Instruments and Data collection

In order to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the study, various instruments of data collection were employed. This helped to triangulate data, generate by the variety of data collection tools.

Hence, data from primary sources were secured through questionnaire, interview, Focus Group Discussion and observation while relevant documents were synthesized and analyzed data. In addition to providing a detailed understanding, interview, focus group discussions, observations, and document analysis were used for complementing as well as triangulate the data that were

collected by means of the questionnaire from teachers and principals regarding the topic under study.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was adopted, and modified based on the existing relevant review literatures, knowledge and experience of the researcher. Furthermore, the questionnaire was translated from English to Amharic and before they were administered to a wider population, they were subjected to comments from different professionals in the area of education and language.

One set questions were prepared to collect data from school principals. Another set of questions were also prepared for teachers of kindergarten. Both sets of questions were close and few open ended questions. Relevant expert requested to comment on the questionnaire prepare for data collection. Two experts were provided important comments on the survey questionnaire; they added important aspects of ECCE that has to been included in the study. They also removed less important question and repetition. Moreover, the experts forwarded suggestions for improvement of the interview and focus group discussions, guides. An expert having language background was commented on the clarity and offer valuable comments and corrections to the entire instrument.

3.4.2 Interview

Interview was used to gather data from AACAEB pre-school expert and Aada sub-city Education Bureau pre-school expert , there were interview guides prepared and the interview were held by the researcher himself and the information obtain from the participant were cross checked with those from other sources.

3.4.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

As the study is aimed at assessing the practices and challenges of ECCE in Arada sub-city kindergartens, it was difficult to obtain detail information with the use questionnaire alone. For this reason the researcher prepared topics to discussion guide line and organize focus group discussion on incidentally available parents either to take or bring their children peak hour to explore the general impression towards the programme and other relevant affairs, as a result 5(five) focus group discussions were conducted consisting 44 parents and/or guardians from

those ten were males and the rest were females of enrolled children in that particular randomly selected centers.

3.4.4 Observation

A check list is a simple device consisting of items which are thought by the researcher to be relevant to the problem being identified and identified and researched (Koul, 1996:151-152). Hence using checklists, randomly select nine (9) kindergartens is observed by the researcher himself to collect and organize relevant data on key inputs and overall indoor/outdoor environment of kindergartens including their documentation along with their entire contents of about the overall current status on the ground by using checklist.

At the end, the information obtained through observation were analyzed and crosschecked with those from other sources and use to validate or not by other participants.

3.4.5 Document analysis

To secure facts and figures along with new policies, directives and strategies, different documents like education abstracts, reports, annual and strategic plans were consulted as secondary source to supplement and/or triangulate the data or information collected through various means as mentioned above.

3.5 Data collection procedures

Data from questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion were gathered with informed consent of participation. Each of the participants was personally contacted and discussions were held on the purpose of the study in order to make sure that the participants are willing to involve in the study. They were told that the information obtained keep confidential. All interviews were held on with the agreement of the participants at any time they feel comfortable. The work of distribution and collection of the questionnaire were done by researcher himself and some others through colleagues accompanied by close follow up by the researcher to give clarification and support in case of difficulties and the work of interview, focus group discussion groups and observations were thoroughly and solely accomplished by the researcher himself.

3.6 Method of data analysis

The data collected in accordance with the nature of basic questions and of the purpose of the study through questionnaires, interview, focus group discussion (FGD) and observation using checklist analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches of data analysis. Quantitative research generates statistics through the use of large scale survey research using instrument like questionnaires (Dawson, 2002:15). Thus, the quantitative data were analyzed by employing descriptive statistics. Furthermore; Descriptive statistical measures are used to describe the characteristics of the sample or population in totality limiting generalization to the group being researched (Koul, 1996:212).

Thus frequency and percentage were used to analyze various characteristics of the participants in the study like sex, age, work experience, and educational qualification as it helps to determine the relative standing of the respondents. Furthermore, responses of participants i.e. principals in five point scale categorical issue towards a certain relevant and attitudinal question were analyzed using frequencies, percentage, mode, means and standard deviations. Computer programme like statistical package for social sciences (SPSS-20) and excel computer application software were used in importing and exporting synthesized output in predefined and selected statistical attributes of different quantitative data. The compiled data were arranged and organized in tables. Moreover, the interpretations were made for all four point scale measurements based on the following mean

Score (=X) results

1. $0 \leq X < 5$ as "I don't know"
2. $5 \leq X < 1.5$ as "Nonexistent"
3. $1.5 \leq X < 3$ as "In-adequate"
4. $2.5 \leq X < 4$ as "Adequate"

At the end, the organized data were interpreted based on the already collected information.

On the other hand, qualitative research explores perception, behavior, and experiences of participants of the study through interview or focus group discussions (Dawson, 2002:14).

Hence, the qualitative data obtained through interview and Focus Group Discussions were analyzed qualitatively and used to supplement and/or triangulate the responses given and the results obtain through questionnaires, similarly, data were collected using observation checklist were compiled and used to substantiate the responses obtained through various means including the pictures taken during observation visit for some randomly selected kindergartens from the sample population. Finally, the major findings of the study were reported and recommendations were forwarded.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Ethics is one of the most crucial areas of the research. In this research there was strong positive interaction between researcher and population sample. First of all there was permission of the kindergartens where study is implemented. The willingness of sample parents, sample teachers, principals, and experts had been assured and reached consensus through discussion.

The researcher mentioned the advantage of the study to kindergartens, educational office, to the students, teachers, and parents and to the whole community.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESULTS

This chapter discusses with the presentation and data analysis gathered from kindergarten education program implementers at different levels of discussion of major issues under basic research questions. The chapter classified in to two parts.

The first part deals with the characteristics and background of the sample population involved in the study in terms of sex, age, education level and years of experience. The second part presents the analysis concerning the practices and challenges of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Arada Sub-City Government kindergartens.

4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

4.1.1 Classification of questionnaire Respondents those are principals and teachers.

There were 11 (100%) principals who receive the questionnaire to fill but one principal was not returned and 10 (90.90%) of them returned after filling properly. In teachers' category, all of the available teachers sample kindergartens, 77 (100%) of them participated and 75 (97.4%) of them returned after filling properly. On the other hand, the total number of interviewees participated were two where one from Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau pre-primary education expert and one from Arada Sub-City Education Bureau pre-primary education expert. Moreover Focus Group Discussion was held among parents/guardians of the programme within five randomly selected kindergartens where each group participated from seven to twelve individuals.

Table-2 Teachers and principals Respondents'**Background profiles**

1. sex	Teachers		principals	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Male	0	0	1	10
Female	75	100	9	90
Total	75	100	10	100
2. Qualification				
Certificate	73	97.33	0	0
Diploma	2	2.67	4	40
Degree	0	0	6	60
3. Experience of principals and Teachers				
Below 2yrs	20	26.7	1	10
Between 2 yrs and 4yrs	21	28	7	70
Between 5 yrs and 6 yrs	14	18.6	2	20
Between 7 yrs and above Yrs	20	26.7	0	0

As it is observed from the above table among the participant of the study with respect questionnaire in teachers' category all of them 75(100%) were females, however in the principal category 1(10%) of the principal was male and 9(90 %) were females. Here it is possible to say that the sampled kindergartens, the teaching profession towards kindergarten education is left to females and being a female as a teacher in the kindergarten is preferred as MOE(2009) standard for preschool education suggests.

With respect the status of qualification almost all 73(97.3%) of teachers were certificate holder and the remaining 2 (2.7%) of teachers were diploma holder, but MOE(2009) standard for preschool suggests kindergarten teacher at least should have diploma holders in pre-primary education on the other hand there is no pre-primary education and training college/institution at diploma level.

In the principal category, 4(40%) were diploma graduates from teacher training college and 6(60%) were first degree graduates.

A number of evidences show that the quality of a certain educational service especially practices of teaching are highly influenced by the qualification, which in turn its own impact on students, principals and teachers.

When we look at the experience of teacher respondents, in Table-2, in teaching at the kindergarten level, 20 (26.7%) have worked in below three years. This was followed by 21(28%) who gave service in area for the years between 2 and 4 and 14 (18.6 %) served between 4 and 6 years time and the rest 20 (26.7 %) worked for more than 6 years. Here the data depict that existence of less experienced or beginner teachers and as well as experienced teachers were equal in the system. It is obvious that experience i.e. being familiar, matters in doing certain activities. The existence experienced teachers in these kindergarten might be good opportunity for those beginners or less experienced and knowledge between and among the group.

Regarding the experience of principals as kindergarten principal is show from the above table. As table-2 depicts, principals that worked as principal school in less than two years were 1(10%) and between two and four years were 7 (70%) and remaining 2(20%) were experienced between 4 to 6 years.

Though, most of the principal is experienced as kindergarten principal they lack sort of training in pre-school education which ultimately may create problems in managing and leading the kindergartens to meet the intended objective of the programme.

Table-3 Teachers and principals Respondents with respect to their Age profile

Age Group of the respondents	Teachers		principals	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Age group of teachers				
Below 20 years	7	9.33	0	0
Between 21 years and 25 years	30	40	2	20
Between 26 years and 35 years	25	33.33	6	60
Between 36 years and 45 years	3	4	1	10
Above 45 years	10	13.33	1	10
Total	75	99.99	10	100

As table-3 depicts, participants from the teachers 7(9.33%) below 20 years of age group and principals were in the age group of between 25 and 35 years which accounted for 6(60 %) . However about 30(40%) of the teachers belong to the age group 20 and 25 years. Similarly, about 25(33.33%) of teachers and 2(20%) of principals were belongs to the age group between 26 to 35 years respectively. 1(10%) principals and 3(4) of teachers belong to the age group of between 36 to 45 years. 10(13.33%) of teachers were belong to the above 45 years. It is possible to say the majority of the teachers which accounted for about 65(86.63%) belong to the young working age group and active adults that could be taken as a good opportunity to the children to express their emotions and feelings without any frustration. Moreover, among the principals, about 1(10%) of them belong to the group of age above 45 years and the rest below. Here, it is possible to conclude that the majority principals were also working groups in the society. This shows there was no as age gap between the majority of teachers and principals.

Table-4 Interviewees disaggregated by Sex and Qualification

Interviewees category and their numbers	Sex		Qualification			
	Male	Female	BA	BSc	MA	MSc
From Addis Ababa City Administration Education Bureau	√				√	
From Arada Sub- City Education Bureau		√		√		

From the above table, the sex and qualification profile of interviewees indicates that one respondent has MA in Special Needs Education and the other respondents were first degree in mathematics. Hence, these profiles of interviewees might have helped the researcher in getting the valuable and reliable information to enrich and substantiate the study.

Table-5 Number of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) parents/guardians disaggregated by sex in respective Kindergartens

Name Focus Group Discussion Kindergarten	Participants (Parents/Guardians)		
	M	F	Total
Africa Andenet No.2	2	6	8
Arbegnoch	3	9	12
Ethiopia Tikidem No. 1	1	6	7
Key Kokebe	1	9	10
Melekam Ermejachen	3	4	7
Total	10	34	44
Percentage by Sex	22.73	77.27	100

Table-5 shows, that the number of participants in the focus group discussions group selected from 5 kindergarten was 10 males (22.73%) and 34 females (77.27%) where the total was (100%). So, it is possible to say that participants in the focus group discussion were inclusive with respect gender and their own respective social status and economic status so that the study

may help to include the perception and attitude of beneficiary families towards the programme

Accessibility of kindergarten

Table-6 Attitude of principals towards the accessibility of kindergartens

Items	Teachers	
	Number	percent
1. Were there enough government kindergartens for children in the surrounding?		
Yes	4	40
No	6	60
Total	10	100
2. Was there any criteria used during selection in to enroll in the kindergarten?		
Yes	8	80
No	2	20
Total	10	100
3. Was there any guideline to select in case of high demand and enrollment capacity?		
Yes	4	40
No	6	60
Total	10	100
4. Was the process of selecting children to admit to your kindergarten participatory?		
Yes	4	40
No	3	30
I don't know	3	30
Total	10	100
5. Was the process selecting children to admit to your kindergarten, free and fair?		
Yes	4	40
No	2	20
I don't know	4	40
Total	10	100
6. Was the kindergarten conducive for children with special needs?		
Yes	3	30
No	7	70
Total	10	100

From Table-6 above, in item-1, participants were asked about whether the government kindergartens in the surrounding are enough for children to enroll or not. Principals 4(40 %) responded as “yes”. In addition, the participants in the Focus Group Discussion interview were also asked similar question, they responded the kindergarten were not enough for children in our surroundings, especially for those whose families have low economic background and the society in general.

In item-2, the participants were asked about the presence of criteria to enroll in the kindergartens. The majority 8 (80%) principals responded “yes”. Similarly, the majority of the participants in the focus group discussion and interview responded yes there is a criterion because there was the presence of high demand to enroll in the kindergartens since the service in free of charge. Following the above response, the participants of the study were asked whether the kindergarten accommodated or not, the response of the interviewees and focus group discussion were, there are children who did not get this chance, because of the low or limited accommodating capacity of the kindergartens.

Again following these responses, the respondents were asked in item-3 and item-4 about the availability of guidelines prepared for the selection purpose whenever there was high demand and low capacity and the process of selecting were participatory. In this regard the availability of prepared guideline in such kindergartens. The majority of the principals 6 (60%) responded as “No there wasn’t” .Furthermore, the respondents in the interview and focus group discussions were also asked to comment on the issue. All of them assured the presence of un official and non uniform criteria’s set by participants in the selection process at woreda/kebele or school level one which the dominant criteria was low capacity or income status of the family or care taker. However, interviewee’s i.e. focal persons or experts in the area from the education sector were asked by the researcher about the presence of centrally prepared general guideline, even to show if there is any be it locally adapted or contextualized guide. They testified the absence of formally prepared guideline from top to bottom except there were locally agreed criteria set by local communities.

From Table-6, participants were asked to respond conducive with respect to children with special needs in the programme. The majority of the respondents of 7 (70%) of the principals responded that as “No, it is not conducive”. However, 3 (30%) of principals responded “yes”, it is conducive”.

In addition, for the previous question, they were asked to mention the possible problem in the area. What the majority of the mentioned were unavailability of trained teachers in the area, the construction of non conducive building like stairs, compound entering gates, classroom gates, insufficient classrooms with limited spaces, unavailability of supporting materials and motivating factors to enroll children with special needs. For those claimed having conducive kindergarten, they were asked whether they had admitted or could be happy to admit those with special needs. They confirmed still the non appearance of any one of their kindergarten in this regard yet and if so they could and would do despite facing different challenges. Moreover, the researcher couldn't find a single child with visible special need especially with disability in those kindergartens. Further the researcher mentioned almost similar question to the focus group discussion participants that is parents to respond, from their experience and attitude from the local community point of view, about why children with disability were not enrolled along with their enabled children in their kindergartens. In their response, they mentioned two important points:

1. Parents might not be interested due lack of awareness to send their children with disability to kindergarten.
2. The kindergartens or government might not be able to fulfill the necessary inputs. Lack of interest from the teachers' and administrators' side to admit and entertain such kind of children may contribute to the problem since taking care and teaching such kind of children seems difficult.

All the above discussions, in one way or the other, they confirm the absence of the participation of children's with special needs in kindergartens due different reasons despite their legal and human rights to benefit equally with other children. However, inclusion of children with special needs not only benefit those who are special needs but also others.

Regarding this Stephens (1996) suggested inclusion encourages children to value diversity. They learn to be compassionate, respectful, and appreciate of those different from themselves.

Therefore, special and critical attention should be given to those kindergartens together with community and/or

parents, stakeholders' involvement to enhance their capacity and commitment to embrace those children with special needs.

Hence the finding is in consistent with what has been reported by UNESCO (2008) cited in Woodhead et al. (2009) where some government services are explicitly intended to be pro-disadvantaged, the practice is quite opposite for many children.

4.3 Efficiency of key Inputs and Its management practices

Table-7: The perception of principals to key Inputs and its practices in the sampled kindergartens.

Items	Principals (N=10)			
	Mode	sum	mean	Std. deviation
Availability of qualified teacher	4	39	3.9	0.32
Availability of teacher's aide	4	36	3.6	0.84
Availability of administrative support staff	4	36	3.6	0.52
Classroom size	3	33	3.3	0.67
Organization of activity centers/corners in the classroom	3	30	3.0	0.67
Availability of child-sized tables, chairs/benches and shelves	4	38	3.8	0.42
Availability of separate feeding room	2	25	2.5	0.53
Availability of separate restroom for girls and boys	3	32	3.2	0.63
Availability of toilets for girls and boys with water	3	33	3.3	0.48
Availability of play ground	4	36	3.6	0.52
General cleanliness and safety the whole environment	4	37	3.7	0.48
Supply different children books	3	32	3.2	0.42
Supply of play materials and equipments	3	33	3.3	0.48
Availability of basic first aid	3	32	3.2	0.63
Availability of easily reached medical consultant	2	24	2.4	0.70
Availability of materials and equipment for children with special needs	2	24	2.4	0.52
Practicing different Teaching methods	4	38	3.8	0.42

Table-7 presents the result of the data analysis using descriptive statistics which will be used in interpretation in accordance with the value obtained.

In Table-7 the most frequent value given by the principals in response to the availability of qualified teachers in their kindergartens was 4 (adequate). The mean response of the principals was also 3.9 accompanied by 0.31 standard deviation respectively. This shows that all respondents agree the adequacy of qualified teachers in the sample kindergartens in each group of respondents. Hence, almost all of the respondents agreed the presence of adequate number of qualified teachers in the sample kindergartens

As Table-7 depicts, the most frequent value given by the principals in response to the availability of teacher's aide in their kindergartens was 4 i.e. adequate. Moreover, as the data indicates the mean value response of the principals was 3.6 along with the standard deviation of 0.84. Here, the majority of the principal respondents responded there was adequacy of availability teacher's aide in the kindergarten. However, the inadequacy teacher's aide was observed during observation visit some of the randomly selected centers. The pre-primary expert at sub-city level also mentioned the presence of the problem. With regard to the availability of administrative support staff Table-7 above, depicts the most frequent value with principals' response was adequate. Similarly the mean value was 3.6. 6(60%) of the principals agree with adequacy of administration staff.

According to the respondents with respect to the organization of activity centers/corners in the classroom, most of respondents favored the in adequacy of the arrangement in the corner of the classroom by the mean 3.3. The observation results also substantiate the claim.

From Table-7 above, principals asked to suggest on the efficiency of classroom space provided per child. Majority of principals responded as in adequate with the mean 3.3. This indicates the presence of large number of children beyond the capacity of classrooms. Overcrowd classroom were observed during observation visit in the selected centers. The demand is high as discussed earlier. Hence, existence of inadequate classroom space was inevitable in most of kindergartens. Principals were again asked to suggest about sufficiency of child-sized tables/chairs, about the general cleanliness and safety of the whole kindergarten environment, playground, supply of play materials and equipment. The great majority responded in favor of the adequacy of the already mentioned items. As the above table-7 depicts, the existence of less than majority, but

considerable numbers of participants in favor of the other category like inadequacy or unavailable with respect to the above mentioned items or components.

Further, the participants of the study were asked the availability and adequacy of separate feeding rooms, separate rest rooms, toilets with water for girls and boys, different children books, basic aid facilities, easily reached medical consultants and about the availability of materials and equipments for children with special needs. The most frequent values responded were either, inadequate or non-existent as well, it means score was less than 3 in both cases. Hence, the majority of respondents emphasized the in adequacy or unavailability of the above mentioned items except few ones. More specifically, separate feeding rooms, easily reached medical consultant and materials & equipments for children with special needs were nonexistent for the great majority of kindergarten according to the respondents.

The information obtained through observation using check list also substantiates the conclusion reached through the data obtained from the questionnaire regarding the above mentioned items of key inputs in kindergarten. In addition, the researcher was able to find very few kindergartens with separate rest rooms, feeding rooms, less crowded classrooms, over sized chairs, non conducive playing fields like dusty and most probably rainy days/season, non conducive toilet tap water area either far from classroom or high to reach, and non attractive or less child friendly environment.

For the holistic development of children, practice of play in a well furnished in and out door child friendly environments is advisable at early ages of the children for their holistic development (Mooney, 2000).

In general, the presence of inadequate inputs is identified to be key impediments of providing quality education in Ethiopia at all levels of education system (MoE, 1994). Though there were adequately qualified teachers in the sampled kindergartens, the above findings suggest presence of continuing trend of other impediments that may hinder the provision of quality kindergarten education for the holistic development of the children.

Table-8 Teachers' Training

Items	Teacher		
	options	N	%
Have you trained in kindergarten teaching at college/University level?	Yes	74	98.7
	No	1	1.3
	Total	75	100
Do you frequently follow on-job training and orientation?	Yes	54	72
	No, I didn't get a chance	21	28
	Total		

As Table-8, depicts, teachers were asked whether they were trained in kindergarten teaching at college/University level or not. Almost all, 74(98.7%) of the responded as they were trained. Hence, no further analysis was made in this regard. In addition, they were asked about on-job training and orientation the majority 54(72%) teachers responded as they had follow on-job training and orientation and the rest 21(28%) responded they didn't get a chance to train.

Regarding the importance of training for kindergarten teacher, Heffman and Tood (1964) as cited in Amelewok (2007) indicated that because teachers markedly influence the lives of children, special professional training is required. Hence, taking a special training in the area of kindergarten education by taking sufficient time is key element to achieve the intended objective of the programme, moreover, continuous on job-training and orientation is also important for teaching kindergarten education.

Table-9 Attitude of teachers towards key Inputs and Management practices

Items	Teacher		
	Options	N	%
1. Was the process of selecting children to admit participatory?	Yes	40	53.33
	No	12	16
	I don't know	23	30.67
	Total	75	100
2. How many students were attending your class?	Between 20-30	49	65.33
	Above 30	26	34.67
	Total	75	100
3. Were there volunteer parents who serve in the kindergarten education programme?	Yes	39	52
	No	36	48
	Total	75	100
4. Was there new Early childhood care and Education (ECCE) curriculum/syllabus at your hand?	Yes	59	78.67
	No	16	21.33
	Total	75	100
5. Have you been taken or participated a workshop on the new ECCE curriculum and on its implementation?	Yes	46	61.33
	No	29	38.67
	Total	75	100
6. Have you ever been received instructional support from your school principal?	Yes	48	64
	No	27	36
	Total	75	100
7. How often did you use teaching aid that meets each students need?	Always	50	66.67
	Sometimes	22	29.33
	Not, at all	3	4
	Total	100	100

8. Did you prepare individual educational plan (IEP) for students who need IEP?	Yes	69	92
	No	6	8
	Total	75	100
9. How often do you give continuous assessment to the students in your class?	Frequently	49	65.33
	Sometimes	28	37.33
	Not, at all	1	1.33
	Total	75	99.99
10. Were the Students sitting arrangement help for active learning?	Yes	61	81.33
	No	14	18.67
	Total	75	100
11. How often did you give group work to students in your classroom?	Frequently	12	16
	Sometimes	49	65.33
	Not, at all	14	18.67
	Total	75	100
12. Did you use variety of teaching methods?	Yes	74	98.67
	No	1	1.33
	Total	75	100

Table-9 above, teachers were asked how many students were in the classroom, the majority 49(65.33%) of responded there were between 20-30. 26(34.67%) were responded as there were above 30.

Table-9 as shown above, the teachers were asked whether the parents were voluntarily serve the kindergarten education programme, 39(52%) were responded as “yes” and the rest 36(48%) were responded as “No”. Further, the teachers were asked whether they had the new ECCE curriculum at their hand and participated orientation workshop or not. The great majority of the teachers responded as “yes” with respect to the availability of the new curriculum and, 46 (61.33%) of respondents did participate in the orientation workshops prepared for the introduction of the new curriculum.

The remaining 29(38.67%) of them didn't participate.

Moreover, teachers were asked whether they received instructional support from their principals or not. Hence, the majority 48 (64 %) responded positively and the rest 27 (36%) responded

negatively, that is "No". For those who responded "No", were asked to mention the probable reasons. Most of them listed down as unavailability of dedicated principal specifically to manage the kindergarten only. Moreover, they mentioned the absence of committed, trained and well oriented principals. In addition, teachers were asked about the existence and frequency of support received from sub-city or woreda education offices. Again these respondents were asked to mention the possible reason for failing to receive support from woreda and sub-city education officials. They mentioned lack of trained officials in the areas lack of giving attention and overburden of jobs as the probable reasons.

As Table-9 above depicts, teachers were asked whether they encourage and motivate all students in the classroom, all 75 (100%) responded as "Yes", in addition, the teachers were asked about how often the teachers was using teaching method

The majority 50(66.67%) of teachers responded as "Yes, always". But, few about 3(4%) of teachers responded "Not at all" and, the remaining 22 (29.33%) of the respondents chose to be in the category of "Sometimes".

The item from the above table has their own inter-relationship in support to one another especially in filling the gap with respect to human resource, knowledge, finance and others. Having a curriculum, getting volunteer services from parents, receiving periodical orientation trainings supervision support, teaching students by giving continuous assessment , group work and variety of teaching methods, by making sitting arrangement etc. are crucial ingredients for the efficiency and effectiveness of the system under discussion.

Moreover, children arrive at school with different backgrounds, experiences, and at different stages of development. To give each student the best possible start, it is essential that pre-school programs provide a variety of method of teaching and instructional experiences. (Haile, 2010:20).

Hence, due attention should be given at maximum effort as far as possible to fill the gap for those who are deficient of the above practices.

To substantiate this, the researcher was trying to observe the profile of the children prepared at kindergarten level in some selected ones: he was able to get some holistic observation or information document, the children's work like their drawings, paintings, and the semester score-result of each child.

Stephens (1996) and MoE, MoH, and MoWA (2010 b) ECCE guideline emphasized the importance applying continuous assessment procedures, systematic collection, documentation, analysis and utilization of information on the overall development of the children in any setting by different means. In this regard, the existing practice is encouraging in some kindergartens.

Table: 10 key Inputs, and management practices with respect to principals' response

Items	Principals (N=10)		
	Choices	N	%
Have you been trained in management or leadership of educational institution?			
	Yes	5	50
	No	5	50
	Total	10	100
Did you frequently get short term training in management of kindergarten?			
	Yes	8	80
	No	2	20
	Total	10	100
Was there any Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy Framework or operational guide line at your hand?			
	Yes	3	30
	No	7	70
	Total	10	100
Did you train in kindergarten education during your stay in college/institution?			
	Yes	2	20
	No	8	80
	Total	10	100
Did you frequently follow on job-training and orientation?			
	Yes	8	80
	No	2	20
	Total	10	100
Did you give only the administrative support to kindergarten staff?			
	Yes	6	60
	No	4	40

	Total	10	100
Had you ever given instructional support to teachers?			
	Yes	10	100
	No	0	0
	Total	10	100
How frequent did you get supervision support from woreda or sub-city education office?			
	Always	1	10
	Sometimes	7	70
	No, support	2	20
	Total	10	100
Was there a regular budget allocated for kindergarten from government?			
	Yes	6	60
	No	4	40
	Total	10	100
Did you get additional financial support from parents voluntarily?			
	Yes	2	20
	No	8	80
	Total	10	100
Did you get additional financial support from nongovernmental organization?	Yes	2	20
	No	8	80
	Total	10	100

Table-10 depicts the management practices along with the status of key inputs as perceived by principals for proper functioning of kindergartens.

In Table-10 above, principals were asked whether they had been trained in management and/or leadership of educational institution or not 5(50%) of the principal responded as “yes” and the rest “No”. This shows about half of the principals were not trained in the area of managing and/or leading educational institutions.

Educational institution is environments where desirable human resources at all levels were to be produced. Hence, it is obvious to have a manager or a leader that is principal who has a special skill and capacity in managing and leading educational institutions. Cognizant of this fact, principals were asked whether they had got short term training on management of kindergartens or not. The great majority of principals 8(80%) responded as “Yes” and the rest 2 (20%) responded as “No”. Similarly they were asked whether they had ever attended any sort of on-job training and orientation session. Again the majority of the principals 80(20%) responded as “Yes”.

In Table-10 above, principals were asked about the availability of the new ECCE policy framework document on their hand. About the great majority 7(70%) of the principal respondents confirmed the non-availability of the document and the rest 3(30%) responder as “Yes”.

Further, in Table-10 above, principals were asked whether they had been trained in kindergarten education during their stay in training colleges/institution or not. About the great majority 8(80%) responded as “No” and the rest 2(20%) responded as “yes”. This again confirms that the great majority of the principals didn’t get the kindergarten education during their stay in colleges.

Again, in Table-10 above, principals were asked about their daily implementation activities and contribution in the area of giving administrative, instructional support of their kindergartens. The number of participants above average, that is 6 (60%) of the principals suggested that they were giving the administrative support. Similarly, the principals asked the issues of addressing instructional support, all 10(100%) were responded as “Yes”. Moreover, in both cases, the proportions of principals to provide the expected support both in the area of administrative, instructional were significant.

Above all, being untrained in the area of kindergarten education as claimed by principals were the possible reasons for failing to give appropriate support. This could have laid a great deal of challenge in practicing the activities that should be done as expected from a certain principal in the area of administrative and instructional support in kindergartens which ultimately might put the pressure on hampering efforts towards achieving the intended programme objectives.

Principals work close cooperation with teachers in all activities of the teaching learning process. Hence, professional knowledge, being trained in the area is important to appropriately practice the above mentioned activities, provide support, and to conduct educational research which is crucial to perform educational activities.

In Table-10 above, principals were asked about the frequency of supervision support they had received from woreda or sub-city education officers.

The majority responded that about 7 (70%) as “sometimes” and 1(10%) as “always” and the rest 2 (20%) as “No support at all”. Here the majority of the principals acknowledged the existence and frequency of support given by the woreda or sub-city education officers.

Further, principals were asked about the existence of allocated regular budget from the government side that could have been utilized for the activities of kindergartens. The majority 6(60%) of them responded in favor of availability of allocated operational budget from the government side where as about 4 (40%) of the principals responded in favor of the non existence of allocated operational budget from the government side.

But, the education experts, all of them responded that there were no solely operational government budget for the kindergarten. They explained the reason as “due to lack of awareness or resistance especially from the financial sector and relevant government authorities in the area of decision making”. However, the interviewee mentioned that kindergarten teachers’ salary was covered by the government budget together with the teachers of primary school.

In a similar fashion, principals were asked in Table-10 above, about whether they were getting financial support from parents or NGOs in supplement to their annual budget. In both cases, about 2(20%) of the parents and principals responded as “yes” and the rest great majority claimed “No”. Here, the practice of the contribution of stakeholders in financing kindergartens seems very less in reference to the responses from the sampled principal respondents.

This shows that the contribution of relevant stakeholders in financing the sector is very limited and hence not considerable as expected in comparable to the demand.

Moreover, principals were asked to list the names of stakeholders who gave support to supplement the budget.

They listed UNICEF most frequently. But philanthropist, community members, organizations who didn't want to be named, parents, School Readiness Initiatives, Arada child and family charitable society belong to those which contribute somehow in supply of different resources either in kind or monetary forms like, stationery materials, learning equipment and playing materials etc..

Table-11 Parents', Local community participation

Items	Choices	principals	
		Number	percent
How do you see openness of your Kindergarten towards the stakeholder participation?	High	5	50
	Medium	3	30
	Low	2	20
	Total	10	100
The kindergarten's relation with other kindergartens	High	2	20
	Medium	6	60
	Low	2	20
	Total	10	100
How do you see the parents' involvement in your kindergarten?	High	2	20
	Medium	6	60
	Low	2	20
	Total	10	100
About the time of discussions and meetings conduct with parents	Every three months	1	10
	Every mid-year	4	30
	At the beginning and end of the year	1	10
	Every month	4	40
	other	0	0
	Total	10	100

Kindergarten principals were asked to indicate the degree of their kindergarten openness towards stakeholders' participation. As Table-11 depicts, 5 (50%) of the principals assured the existence of high degree openness. In addition about 3(30%) principals' respondents respectively favored "medium" level of openness towards stakeholder participation. The remaining others responded in favor of low level of openness.

Moreover, parents who participated in the focus group discussion were asked about the situation of difficulties they encountered when they intended to participate in different areas of support. They confirmed the enthusiastic entertainment and high level of welcome by the teachers, and kindergarten coordinators together with school principals. Hence, it is possible to conclude that the extent of openness of kindergartens towards stakeholders participation were said to be greatly average and hence encouraging.

In Table-11 above, principals were asked about kindergarten relation to kindergarten,

2 (20%) of principals responded "high", more than average 6(60%) of parents responded as "Medium" and the remaining responded 2(20) as low, sharing experience of kindergartens each other is increasing social relation, educational knowledge and etc.

Moreover, principals were asked about the extent of parents' involvement in kindergarten affairs in the table-11 depicts that about 2(20%) principals responded as "high" whereas about the majority i.e. 6 (60%) principals responded as "medium" level of participation of parents in the kindergarten affairs. The rest 2 (20%) principals responded in favor of low level of parents participation. Further, during the focus group discussion of parents they were asked the extent of their participation in the kindergarten affairs, there were some of parents especially committee members of the kindergarten were highly participated, but the majority of parents responded that, their participation was not significant and not as expected. The interviewees also witnessed the low level of participation of parents in the kindergarten affairs. Hence, it was possible to conclude that the participation of parents in the kindergarten was low in practice. Though the general participation level of parents was not as high as expected, in the focus group discussion and interviewees were asked to say on the areas of participation of parents that they did experience before.

The majority of them responded in contributing money donation to fulfill the gap of inputs, participating in labor work like cleaning the kindergarten compounds.

Further, the participants of the study in the category of perceiving of parents were asked to mention some basic possible reasons. The great majority of the respondents mentioned the following;

1. The low level of awareness by parents about the benefits of kindergarten education since most of the beneficiary group parents' were illiterate
2. Since beneficiaries are at low income family group, they give priority to only their private job to get their daily bread by running here and there to assure their survival.
3. They didn't give attention and attend even when they called for a meeting to discuss about the issue of their children, which on the way, would have created awareness about the responsibilities and obligations of parents in child rearing activities.
4. Further, the respondent were asked about the time of discussion and meetings with parents, 1(10%) of the participants responded as "Every three months" and "At the beginning and end of years", the other 4(40%) of principals responded as "Every mid-year" and "Every month".

Stephans (1996) puts first the importance of planning to meet parents, welcoming and informing them about overall situation including the progress of their children have made to initiate and enhance the participation of parents perhaps training may be required before parents can do a job, he added. Therefore, this variability and of long awaited time and approach to communicate parents and local communities may create a great deal of rift to draw more attention and to gain advantage more out of it equitably in the sector with respect to the participation of parents. Hence kindergartens should give due attention to the time and the way of communicating parents in a more planned, coordinated and systematic manner.

4.4.2 Health sector participation

Table-12 Health sector participation

Items	Choices	principals	
		Number	percent
Is there any health officer or representative from the health sector have ever come to visit you kindergarten even to use it to meet with parents			
	Yes	5	50
	No	5	50
	Total	10	100
How do you see the relationship between the kindergarten and health office			
	Very Strong	0	0
	Less Strong	6	60
	No relationship	4	40
	Total	10	100

Table-12 from above tries to show the extent of health sector participation in the sampled kindergartens with respect to the items indicated. Here, in the above table, both teachers and principals were asked about whether health officer or representative has ever come to visit their kindergarten. The half-split of respondents that is 5(50%) of the principals say “Yes” and the other were responded as “Yes”. For those who responded as “yes” they were further asked to respond on the extent of their visit in this regard they claimed to say as “sometimes”.

Further, in Table-12 above, principals were asked kindergartens comment about the general relationship of their kindergarten and the locally available health offices.

Following this, the majority of the principals 6 (60%) responded as “less strong, relationship” and also about 4(40%) principals responded as “No. relationship at all”

To triangulate the perception and practice of involvement interviewees were made with respect to the education expert from the sub-city about the general relationship of the health sector in the area under the study confirmed was about lack of coordinated work accompanied by insignificant and invisible contribution of the health sector involvement on the ground.

4.4.3 NGOs participation

Table-13 NGO's participation

Items	Choices	principals	
		Number	percent
Is there any local/international NGOs working with your kindergarten			
	Yes	8	80
	No	2	20
	Total	10	100

Here, principals were asked about whether the local/international nongovernmental organizations were working with them. Following the question

Table-13 depicts that the great majority 8(80%) of respondents gave a positive response and the rest 2(20%) responded negatively. Moreover, the interviewees also responded the presence of local and international NGOs which are working in the area in cooperation with the specific kindergartens and the bureau level like UNICEF.

Further, pertinent questions were asked for those who witnessed the presence of NGOs support to mention the expression of support they possessed together with their names. The most frequently mentioned names were in the form of fulfilling input facilities like tap water, playing materials, toilet and other educational material support like children books through funding money; Arada child and Family charitable society in the form of material support like stationery and uniform for the children; School Readiness initiative in the in the form of fulfilling input facilities.

As it is depicted from the above information, it is possible to conclude that the participation of local and international NGOs including local volunteers seems encouraging and commendable. However, it lacks a sort of coordination and consistence which actually may trigger unequal distribution of resources among those in need of support either due to chance or matter of focused activities done by concerned people or organization.

UNESCO (2003) report in Taylor & Woods (2005), and Papalia & Olds (1990) suggested that children's holistic development can only be ensured if there is close coordination or preferably integration of the education, social, and health sectors together which parents, and other organizations working in the area including programme implementation.

4.5 opportunities

The great majority of respondents suggest about the good opportunities for the expansion and strengthening of existing kindergarten as these: Increasing interest from local and international institutes and governments together with different stakeholders towards early childhood care and education for all children without any discrimination, increasing regional and local administrative government's initiation and commitment, high demand from the society to early childhood education, having a wide availability of space for further expansion in some established schools to enroll more, the existence strong commitment from the school leadership together with implementing partners to sustain the existing ones and for further expansion through mobilization resources, the existence of opportunities to teachers to upgrade to diploma level in summer programme from kotebe college of teachers education.

These were some of the pressing pointes by the respondents with respect to the available opportunities for further expansion and sustainability.

4.6 The major challenges facing in the process of programme implementation

Lack of clearly allocated money or budget in a sustainable manner to the kindergartens, lack of capacity though the demand is getting high, lack of motivation and commitment to allocate responsible professionals body at all levels to coordinate all relevant bodies in the area, or loosen coordination and relationship between stakeholders like parents, offices of education, Health, women and child affairs and different NGOs.

These may hinder the proper and efficient utilization of resources and which ultimately affects the holistic development of

children. Moreover non uniform education services delivered by the government and private sector which may in turn contribute to dissatisfaction and lead to bias from parents' and local communities' side towards the services rendered in government kindergartens as low quality, lack of sufficient advocacy work to fill the awareness or information gap about the objective of kindergarten education specific to its curriculum content and implementation strategies and lack of sufficient and consistent leadership and coordination that could be challenges/problems faced them as mentioned by participants of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter deals with summary of the findings, conclusions reached, and recommendations

5.1 Summary of findings

The main purpose of the study was to assess the practices and challenges of Early Childhood Care and Education in Arada sub-city government kindergartens.

In order to achieve this purpose the following basic questions were formulated where the answers through addressing the following questions.

1. How is the accessibility of kindergarten education in the sub-city?
2. To what extent are kindergartens equipped with the necessary trained man power, learning materials and over all indoor/outdoor environments?
3. What is the status of stakeholders' participation/ involvement in kindergarten education?
4. What opportunities and challenges have kindergartens encountered in practicing ECCE?

In dealing with the basic research question, descriptive survey method was employed and relevant literature was reviewed. Data were collected using questionnaires, for teachers and principals, interviews for educational expert at regional and sub-city levels, focused group discussion was held with parents, and observation check list together with document analysis were performed to triangulate and substantiate the information obtained through synthesis of questionnaires. Analysis of questionnaires data was made using descriptive statistical tools like frequency, percentages, the mean, the mode, and the standard deviation.

Eleven (11) government kindergartens were involved in the study using available sampling which was again applied for the teacher and principal participants, where as random sampling and incidental sampling techniques were applied for the selection of centers of focus group discussion and its participants respectively.

Moreover, centers for interview at sub-city and regional level were selected purposely because of their relevance position and responsibility to the subject under study.

As a result a total of 134 individuals participated in the study among which 88 (77 teachers and 11 principals, even though, 2 teachers and 1 principal didn't return the questionnaire) participated in filling the questionnaire, 5 group of focus group discussion which comprise a total of 44 parent/guardian and 2 interviewees (one Addis Ababa city Administration Education Bureau, one from Arada Sub-city Education Bureau) participated in the study and their responses, comments, suggestions to the relevant questions were synthesized and utilized accordingly.

The major finding of the study have been presented below in the form of answers given to the basic question

1. Accessibility of the kindergarten

All of participants of the study i.e. teachers, principals, and parents under the focus group discussion and interviewees of educational experts responded positively about the desirability of the government kindergartens by the local community. However, they emphasized the low capacity of kindergartens which were not commensurate with the existing high demand. All teachers and principals confirmed the high demand to be enrolled in the government kindergartens. However, asked about the accessibility of government kindergarten in the surrounding 6 (60%) of principals responded negatively as their kindergarten capacity was limited .Thus was strongly substantiate by the participants from the focus group and interview as well.

Furthermore, asked about the participatory and fairness nature of the registering and admitting children to the respective kindergartens, the majority of the respondents favored to response positively. However, the number of respondents in the negative category of the responses was not negligible. Most likely, this might have happened due to either lack of transparency and/or participation in the process of selection together with setting and applying some sort of unclear criteria. In line with this the majority of the respondents from principals, 60% of them claimed the non-existent of prepared guideline used for the beneficiary selection process.

To substantiate this, focus group discussion participants and interviewees were asked about the issue.

They responded the presence of some sort locally developed criteria set by selection committees or institutions at woreda and/or school level like education office, Parent Student and Teacher Association (PSTA) members; but, no uniformly developed adaptable guideline from top to down in the administrative hierarchy dedicated to the selection process.

Regarding the conduciveness of kindergarten for children with disability about the majority of principal participants believe that their kindergartens were to less conducive for children with disability, moreover there are problems like lack of trained teachers in the area of special needs, absence of support materials including suitable curriculum to special needs non comfortable environments like stairs up/down to classrooms, gates, compounds, little space in to classroom and entire compound, in sufficient human resource in the area of teachers and care takers were some of the points raised by those responded in favor of the non-conducive nature of the current kindergartens environment. However, almost all of the participants of the study agreed the non appearance of any one to the sampled kindergartens with easily visible disability or special need phenomenon. Here observation and daily follow up were important factors to detect such kind of events through organized profile examination through not practiced in the most possible professional's way as the teacher observed and mentioned above.

2. The sufficiency and efficiency of key inputs and its management practices.

Both the teachers and principals were asked about the efficiency of key inputs and the management practices under way.

The majority of principals witnessed the adequacy of nature of qualified teachers, child sized tables and chairs cleanliness and safety of the environment, availability of play ground, administrative support staff, supply of play materials and equipment, practicing different teaching methods. But, the availability of sufficient teaching aide, separate restroom, toilets with water, different children's book, first aid materials, classroom space per child in the sampled kindergartens and organization of activity centers/corners were claimed to be inadequate.

However, the number of respondents who claimed the availability nature of easily reached medical consult, material and equipments for children with special needs and separate feeding rooms were significantly low or non-existent. These were items were considered nonexistent by the majority of respondents. It was again substantiated through observation by the researcher.

In line with the management practices, about the great majority i.e. 80% of the principal respondents claimed no trained in the area of managing kindergartens either a pre-service or in service short term programmes. Furthermore, 30% of principals responded, the ECCE policy framework and operational guideline of Ethiopia were in their hand.

In addition, the principals were asked whether they were trained in kindergarten education at college level, about 80% of the principals said “No”. Under such circumstances about 60% of principals claimed they were giving only the administrative support. On the other hand, about all of the principals claimed they were giving instructional support to the teacher of kindergarten. However, those who couldn’t administrative support listed out their being untrained in the area and overburden of other routine activities as possible reason for their failure to do so as expected. Moreover, most of teacher respondents raised the issue of lack of giving serious attention, in addition to the factors mentioned above affecting the practice of support from principals to teachers and kindergarten as a whole in different administrative affairs. Most of principals claimed that the non existence of allocated budget to kindergarten.

The contribution of parents in the area of financial support was minimal as the participants in the focus group discussion confirmed due to their being at lowest level of income. Rather, their areas of contribution were largely in labor support when needed.

Specific kindergarten teachers, all of them were trained in kindergarten education. Further the great majority of the teachers have the new ECCE curriculum/syllabus in their hand and the majority of teachers participated a workshop on the new ECCE curriculum. Moreover, the majority of the teachers witnessed positively about the instructional support they got from their principals. However, the most pressing among the causes suggested for failing to provide instructional support was the availability of untrained principals in the area of pre-school education.

Further the teachers were asked about encouragement and motivation of students, use of teaching aid that meets each students need, prepare individual educational plan (IEP) for students who need IEP, give continuous assessment to the students in, Students sitting arrangement help for active learning, give group work to students and use variety of teaching methods and the majority of teachers responded positively, but in the researcher observation of documents and portfolio of students in he did not see any individual educational plan (IEP) prepared students who need IEP.

3. Major stakeholders' participation

The general openness of kindergarten towards stakeholders' participation was assumed to be average and the great majority of the teacher and principal respondents favored more than that. However, the participation of parents, health officers were assumed to be low.

Further, almost all of them preferred to indicate nonexistent of relationship or less strong relationship between and among local health offices, and the kindergartens. But, the participation of different NGOs was claimed to be above average. Particularly about 8(80%) principal respondents respectively witnessed the existence of support and positive relationship with local and international NGOs. The support from NGOs involved more in the form of finance, material/equipment donation, and training. But, it lacks close coordination and work for all pertinent bodies or stakeholders as claimed by interviewees. Again the observation results in the great majority of sampled kindergartens confirmed weak or totally unavailability of integrated and well documented supportive documents which might show the contribution of stakeholders.

4. Major challenges/problem faced

Though some major problems/challenges were identified from above with respect to the sufficiency and efficiency of the demand, capacity, inclusiveness, key inputs, management practices and in the area of participation of stakeholders', now only those points that were not mentioned from above will be taken in to consideration as expressed by the respondents.

Additional major challenges were assumed to be the existence of old classroom which lack neatness absence of close/coordinated relationship among education, health office, parents and child and other stakeholders not giving enough attention from all sides, being most of the beneficiary group poor , presence of unbalanced age group in the classroom, non conducive local

environment, parents' low level of income, education and attitude towards early learning due to the absence restroom, availability of untrained teachers, ambiguity nature of syllabus, the existence of high child-section ratio, lack of free space for establishment of some targeted areas/schools, absence of independent and skilled leadership, high turnover of staff in the leadership position at all levels, were some of the points mentioned in the challenges category.

Most of the respondents also suggested as follows:

Lack of clearly allocated money or budget in sustainable manner, lack of accommodation capacity, in sufficient allocation of professionals at all levels to coordinate all relevant bodies in the areas, and then like were mentioned. Moreover, the existing of those relationship between and among major stakeholders. Non uniform education service delivered by the government and the private sector, lack of consistent awareness creation activities about the objective of kindergarten education.

5. Opportunities

Increasing interest and commitment from local and international institutes like regional and local administration governments high demand from the society, UNICEF and other donor agencies, pertinent, stakeholders, the existence of opportunities to teachers to upgrade to diploma level specializing in ECCE in summer programme from kotebe college of teacher education and others. These were some of pressing points mentioned by the respondents towards the positive prospect of the programme.

5.2 Conclusions

As the finding of the study indicated, the great majority of government kindergartens in Arada Sub-city appeared to have been surrounded by numerous problems/challenges.

Though the desirability of the programme was believed to be high, the limited number and capacity of kindergartens to enroll those who were in need of free of charge service posed a problem and forced most of them to stay away from having access to early childhood education, because of the weak capacity of parents or guardians to register their children in private or nongovernmental kindergartens.

Due to the presence of high demand and low capacity of enrollment, selection of the beneficiaries was a must for admission. Here, the criteria and approach used by the selection committees or offices filtering the children varies from kindergarten to kindergarten based on the participatory and transparency along with free and fairness nature of the selection process as it was indicated by significant number of participants in the study. The absence of clear guideline that could be under such circumstances might be taken seriously as a contributing factor to the problem.

In line with the children with special needs were almost nonexistent in the sampled kindergartens. Hence, the non inclusive practice of the programme was highly reflected in the study thought about majority of the respondents claimed about the existence of conducive kindergarten environment especially for children with disabilities. Similarly, lack of trained teachers, unavailability of basic infrastructure and support materials together with supportive human resources, absence of suitability prepared curriculum accompanied by cultural and social resistant forces from the society might hampered the participation of those children with special needs. In judging, not few of teachers and principals respondent as “I don’t know”. This indirectly confirms the absence of well organized children’s profile information in the institution or classroom. Further, the observation results confirm the absence of well organized and documented information.

The availability of separate rest rooms, toilets with water, different children’s books, first aid materials and organization of activity centers/corners were claimed to be inadequate. Moreover the number of respondents who claimed the availability nature of easily reached medical consults, materials and equipments for children with special needs and separate feeding rooms were insignificant; they were considered non-existent by the majority of the respondents.

Almost about the majority of principals didn’t get trained in administering educational institutions or kindergartens either in the pre-service or in service short term training programmes. In addition, the observation results indicate that principals didn’t consider the issue of kindergarten teachers in their annual or strategically and proactively with clear direction as the time of demands. Participants of the study indicated the non existence of clearly demarcated regular government operational budget to such kindergartens except sharing resources with the primary school and covering the salary cost of the teachers in combination with the primary schools.

In general, the participation and coordination of major stakeholders like parents; health sector and different NGOs, except UNICEF and the sector were assumed to be weak and very much below expected kindergarten level.

Though most of the major problems/challenges were identified from above, some additional points raised by the participants of the study could be emphasized here again like being most of the beneficiary group from poor or destitute family/guardian, presence of unbalanced age group in the classroom, non conducive local environments, the high expectance of parents' from their children with respect to only their academic performance which lead to disagreement between teachers and parents which ultimately leads to dissatisfaction from both sides: parents' loosen interest, belief in the service in the government kindergartens in comparable to private kindergartens, parents and local communities low level of awareness about the objective of kindergarten education, availability of untrained teachers in the new syllabus which might create difficulties for proper implementation, the existence of high child-section ratio, unavailability of free space in some targeted schools for establishment or expansion and absence of independent, frequent turnover of staffs at all levels and lack of skilled leadership in the area.

Lack of commitment in allocating budget and dedicated professionals, huge backlog and lack of strategically planed commensurate increase in capacity with the demand, lack of well coordinated and integrated efforts in the intervention and others were some of points considered as challenges.

In general, it is possible to deduce that the increasing attention and commitments from international and local governance prospective together with initiation like publishing dissemination of ECCE policy Framework along with its strategic operational guideline, the continuous effort and unwavering commitment made by UNICEF and other partners in strengthening the existing and establishing the new ones may play a major role in the expansion process.

Moreover, the conclusion and emphasis given in the ESDP-IV and Growth and Transformation plan of Education Bureau, increasing demand to get free service from all walks of life especially from those disadvantaged groups and other related factors can trigger a lot of sustaining and enhancement efforts in all aspects from all direction under normal circumstance.

5.3 Recommendations

In order to solve the problems/challenges the government kindergarten were facing, and to improve their performance the following recommendations have been forwarded based on the findings of the study.

- ✚ In presence of high demand but low capacity to accommodate all those in need and interested the practice of opening new kindergartens and giving services free of charge in government kindergarten should be and scaled up to not only in the government but also in the public kindergarten at low fee charge for those capable to afford .
- ✚ Some participants of the study have put the participatory fairness nature of the beneficiary selection process under question. Hence, it is advisable to prepare comprehensive guideline that can be utilized in the selection process of beneficiaries to ensure targeted groups are reached which in turn enhances transparency and accountability of implementing bodies and partners.
- ✚ Children with special needs particularly those with disabilities were not available, even in those kindergartens assumed to be conducive. Hence, the participation of children with disability has been hampered not only by the non conduciveness nature of kindergartens but also socio-cultural factors as well witnessed by respondents.
- ✚ Addis Ababa Education Bureau should take the initiation and lead to using its curriculum expert to supplement the existing kindergarten curriculum with contextualized text books and teacher guides to minimize or avoid the ambiguity and difficulty nature of the curriculum and repeatedly demand of refreshment training from existing teachers and the new comers in to the system
- ✚ Refreshment trainings, workshops, and seminars on the issue of kindergarten education need be prepared jointly by all relevant stakeholders so that everyone can get awareness and take the responsibility under common understanding. It is also advisable to institutionalize the coordination efforts through establishing a sort of sectoral/institutional network at all levels.

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